

THE
TRAGEDIES
OF

156. G. 24.

Sophocles

SOPHOCLES,

From the GREEK;

By THOMAS FRANKLIN, M. A.

Fellow of Trinity-College, and Greek-Professor in the University of Cambridge

V O L I.

Nulla Sophocleo veniet jactura cothurno.

156 G 2



E. Gemma in Museo Florentino.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED for R. FRANKLIN, in Covent-Garden, 1759.

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College of Fort William



XVIII. 9

T O H I S

R O Y A L H I G H N E S S

T H E

P R I N C E of W A L E S.

May it please your Royal Highness,

A N T I E N T tragedy in it's pure and perfect state was made subservient only to the noblest purposes, and sacred to truth, religion and virtue. This species of the drama attain'd to it's highest degree of perfection in the time, and under the direction of the immortal Sophocles, the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his contemporaries, and in a word, the Shakespear of antiquity.

D E D I C A T I O N.

SUCH is the work, and such the author, which I have the honour to present to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. That a writer so universally applauded, should never yet have been seen in an English habit (for the disguises, which he has hitherto worn, are not worthy of that name) is certainly a matter of astonishment; but Sophocles seems purposely to have waited for the present happy opportunity of making his first appearance amongst us, under the patronage of your ROYAL HIGHNESS; a circumstance, which has made him ample retribution for all our former slight and neglect of him. The author of the following sheets, though conscious of his own inabilities, and the difficulty of the task which he has undertaken, approaches your ROYAL HIGHNESS with confidence, as satisfy'd that the same kindness and humanity, which induced your ROYAL HIGHNESS to accept these volumes, will also
pardon

DEDICATION.

pardon their errors and imperfections ; and at the same time flatters himself that the rest of his readers will pay some deference to so illustrious an example.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS will pardon me, if, with my warmest acknowledgments on this occasion, I take the liberty to mingle my hearty congratulations on this day's solemnity : the world of letters, and the circle of arts and sciences, have a peculiar interest in every thing that concerns their patron and protector : permit me therefore in their name to wish your ROYAL HIGHNESS that health, happiness and prosperity, on which their own must in a great measure depend : permit me to wish that Britain under your ROYAL HIGHNESS's influence may become the darling seat of taste and genius, the throne of literature, and the constant residence of honour, freedom, piety

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piety and virtue : this, may it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS, is the wish, this is the well-founded hope of all, and of none more truly, firmly, and sincerely, than

May it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

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June, 4th, 1759.

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ON, or before the first of November next, will be publish'd,

A D I S S E R T A T I O N

O N T H E

A N T I E N T T R A G E D Y;

Which will be deliver'd (Gratis) to the Subscribers to this Work, who are desired to send for it, as soon as printed, to R. FRANCKLIN, in Ruffel-street, Covent-garden.

ERRATA.

V O L. I.

PAGE 19, l. 11, for *inspired*, read *inspir'd*. p. 123, l. 1. after *quick*, omit the comma. p. 184, in the note, after *therefore*, for *was*, read *were*. p. 216, for p. 116 read 216.

V O L. II.

PAGE 24, l. 2, after *ears*, omit the comma. p. 106, in the note, for *πολλοι*, read *πολλοι*, and for *Eustatbeus* read *Eustathius*. p. 120, before l. 1, insert

DEIANIRA. p. 162, l. 1, for *darts* read *starts*. p. 203, l. 2, after *accurs'd* put a comma. p. 210, after *prophet* insert [Exeunt. p. 374, l. 3, for *seek* read *seeks*.



A J A X.



Dramatis Personæ.

MINERVA.

ULYSSES.

AJAX.

TECMESSA, wife of Ajax.

TEUCER, brother to Ajax.

AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS,

Composed of antient men of Salamis.

A J A X.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

A field near the tent of A J A X.

M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

M I N E R V A.

S O N of Laertes, thy unweary'd spirit
Is ever watchful to surprise the foe ;
I have observ'd thee wand'ring midst the tents
In search of Ajax, where his station lyes,
At th' utmost verge, and meas'ring o'er his steps
But late impress'd; like Sparta's hounds of scent

B

Sagacious,

Sparta's hounds, &c. The dogs of Sparta, according to all the best authors of antiquity, were remarkable for their swiftness and quick scent; Virgil mentions the veloces Spartæ catulos; Gratius Faliscus also takes notice of them. Our countryman Shakespear, therefore, we see had good authority for his recommendation of Theseus's hounds, who he tells us

Were of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so fanded, &c. See his Midsummer night's dream.

Sagacious, dost thou trace him, nor in vain;
 For know, the man thou seek'st is not far from thee;
 Yonder he lyes, with reeking brow and hands
 Deep-stain'd with gore; cease then thy search, and tell me
 Wherefore thou com'st, that so I may inform
 Thy doubting mind, and best assist thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Minerva, dearest of th' immortal pow'rs,
 For, tho' I see thee not, that well-known voice
 Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my soul,
 Right hast thou said, I come to search my foe,
 Shield-bearing Ajax; him alone I seek:
 A deed of horror hath he done this night,

If

Tho' I see thee not, &c. It was the acknowledged and indisputable privilege of heathen gods and goddesses to be visible and invisible, as they thought proper, and likewise to extend, whenever they pleased, that privilege to others; in the two first scenes of Ajax we have instances of both; in the first, Minerva is not seen by Ulysses, and in the second, Ulysses, by the power of Minerva, is render'd invisible to Ajax. The reason of the latter is sufficiently evident; for the former it is not so easy to assign any, as the goddess had descended on purpose to converse with her favourite; to conceal herself therefore from his sight seems unaccountable.

Shield-bearing Ajax, &c. The greater Ajax is distinguish'd by Homer, from whom Sophocles copies his character, for his enormous shield, which none but himself was able to lift; in the seventh book of the Iliad we find it thus described.

Stern Telamon behind his ample shield,
 As from a brazen tow'r, o'erlook'd the field;
 Huge was its orb, with sev'n thick folds o'ercast
 Of tough bull-hides, of solid brass the last. POPE.

If it be he, for yet we are to know
 The certain proof, and therefore came I here
 A willing messenger: the cattle all,
 Our flocks and herds, are with their shepherds slain:
 To Ajax ev'ry tongue imputes the crime;
 One of our spies who saw him on the plain,
 His sword still reeking with fresh blood, confirm'd it:
 Instant I fled to search him, and sometimes
 I trace his footsteps, which again I lose.
 I know not how; in happy hour thou com'st
 To aid me, goddess; thy protecting hand
 Hath rul'd me ever, and to thee I trust
 My future fate.

M I N E R V A.

I know it well, Ulysses,
 And therefore came to guard and to assist thee
 Propitious to thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Do I right,
 My much-lov'd mistress?

M I N E R V A.

Doubtless; his foul deed
 Doth well deserve it.

U L Y S S E S.

What cou'd prompt his hand
To such a desp'rate act?

M I N E R V A.

Achilles' arms;
His rage for loss of them.

U L Y S S E S.

But wherefore thus
Destroy the flock?

M I N E R V A.

'Twas in your blood he thought
His hands were stain'd

U L Y S S E S.

Against the Græcians then
Was all his wrath?

M I N E R V A.

And fatal had it prov'd
To them, if I had not prevented it.

U L Y S S E S.

What daring insolence cou'd move his soul
To such a deed?

M I N E R V A.

Alone by night he wander'd
In secret to attack you.

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

Did he come

Close to our tents?

M I N E R V A.

Ev'n to the double portal,

Where rest your chiefs.

U L Y S S E S.

What pow'r cou'd then withhold

His madd'ning hand?

M I N E R V A.

I purposely deceiv'd

His fight, and sav'd him from the guilty joy,
Turning his rage against the mingled flocks,
Your gather'd spoil; on these with violence
He rush'd, and slaughter'd many; now he thought
That he had slain th' Atridæ, now believ'd
Some other chiefs had perish'd by his hand.
I saw his madness and still urg'd him on,
That he might fall into the snare I laid:
Tired with his slaughter now he binds in chains
The living victim, drives the captive herd
Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men:

There beats with many a stripe the helpless foe.
 But I will shew thee this most glaring phrenzy,
 That to the Græcians what thy eyes beheld
 Thou may'st report: be confident, nor fear
 His utmost malice; I shall turn his sight
 Askant from thee. Ajax, what ho! come forth,
 Thou who dost bind in chains thy captive foes,
 Ajax, I say, come forth before the portal.

U L Y S S E S.

What woud'st thou do, Minerva? Do not call him.

M I N E R V A.

What shou'd Ulysses fear?

U L Y S S E S.

O! by the Gods

I do intreat thee, let him stay within.

M I N E R V A.

But wherefore? Thou hast seen him here before.

U L Y S S E S.

There beats with many a Stripe, &c. In allusion to this circumstance, the title of the play in the original is *Atas Μαστοφορος*, or, Ajax the whip bearer; so call'd either by Sophocles himself, or some of the antient commentators, to distinguish it from Ajax the Locrian, another tragedy written by him, but now lost. As the appellation of whip-bearer, however happily adapted to an Attic, might not so well suit the delicacy of an English ear, I have taken the liberty to sink it upon my readers, who, I apprehend, will be content with the title of Ajax only. Mr. Brumoy for the same reason has omitted it, and calls it, in his translation, *Ajax furicux*.

U L Y S S E S.

He ever was, and is my deadliest foe.

M I N E R V A.

O! but to laugh an enemy to scorn
Is mirth most grateful.

U L Y S S E S.

I had rather still

He come not here.

M I N E R V A.

And art thou then afraid

To see a madman?

U L Y S S E S.

I shou'd little dread

The fight of Ajax in his better mind.

M I N E R V A.

He will not see thee be thou e'er so near.

U L Y S S E S.

Impossible! his eyes are still the same.

M I N E R V A.

But I shall throw a veil of darkness o'er them.

U L Y S S E S.

By pow'rs immortal all things may be done.

M I N E R V A.

Wait then in silence till he come.

U L Y S S E S.

8

A J A X.

U L Y S S E S.

I will ;

And yet 'twere better to retire.

M I N E R V A.

What ho !

Ajax, again I call thee, wherefore pay'st thou
So little rev'rence to thy guardian pow'r ?

S C E N E II.

A J A X, M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

A J A X.

Hail to the daughter of great Jove ! to thee,
Minerva, hail ! thou com'st in happy hour,
For I will crown thee with the golden spoils
Which I have gain'd by thy assisting hand.

M I N E R V A.

'Twere better to retire, &c. Sophocles has closely copied his great master, Homer, in the character of Ulysses, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumspection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generosity. He is extremely loth, we may observe, to trust himself with Ajax, even though he had a goddess to protect him. I had rather, says he, after all, be a little farther off. Hic (says Camerarius in a note on this passage) est timor prudentiæ, this is but a prudent fear, for who would wish to meet a madman ? Brumoy, however, is of another opinion ; il me paroît (says he) un peu lâche, & J'avoue que ce trait n'est pas à la louange d'Ulysse ni de Sophocle ; mais le roi d'Ithaque étoit trop connu pour le déguiser aux spectateurs, & les idées de prudence & de bravoure étoient alors bien différentes de celles d'aujourd'hui. To say the truth, prudence amongst the ancients seems to have favour'd a little of cowardice, as their courage and valour border'd

A J A X.

9

M I N E R V A.

Well haft thou spoke ; but fay, has Ajax dip'd
His fpear in Græcian blood ?

A J A X.

It is my boaft ;

I'll not deny it.

M I N E R V A.

Did th' Atridæ feel
Thy vengeful arm ?

A J A X.

They never will again
Difhonour Ajax.

M I N E R V A.

If I underftand thee,
They are both dead.

A J A X.

They are ; now let 'em come,
And take my arms away.

M I N E R V A.

But tell me, Ajax ;
Laertes' fon, hath he escap'd thy wrath ?

A J A X.

'Talk'ft thou of him, that fox accurs'd ?

C

M I N E R V A.

M I N E R V A.

I mean

Thy foe, Ulysses.

A J A X.

O! he is my captive,
The fairest of my spoils; I have him here;
He shall not perish yet.

M I N E R V A.

What 'vantage then
Mean'st thou to draw from his confinement?

A J A X.

First,

I'll have him bound to th' pillar.

M I N E R V A.

And, what then
Wou'dst thou inflict?

A J A X.

His limbs all purpled o'er
With many a bloody stripe; he shall be slain.

M I N E R V A.

Do not torment him thus.

A J A X.

In all things else,
Minerva, wou'd I gratify thy will,
But this, and this alone must be his fate.

M I N E R V A.

A J A X.

II

M I N E R V A.

Since 'tis so pleasing to thee, be it so,
Nor quit thy purpose.

A J A X.

I must to my work ;
Thus, great Minerva, may'st thou ever smile
Propitious on me, and assist thy Ajax.

[Exit.

S C E N E III.

M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

M I N E R V A.

Behold, Ulysses, here the mighty strength
Of pow'r divine : liv'd there a man more wise,
More fam'd for noble deeds than Ajax was ?

U L Y S S E S.

None, none indeed ; alas ! I pity him ;
Ev'n in a foe I pity such distress,
For he is wedded to the worst of woes :
His hapless state reminds me of my own

C 2

And

Since 'tis so pleasing to thee. The Greek is, *επειδὴ σοι τερψίς*, which literally translated, answers to our phrase, since it is thy pleasure : but this is generally made use of by us from an inferior to a superior, and consequently would be improper from Minerva to Ajax, where it is the direct contrary : the only means to say, since it gives thee such extraordinary delight and satis-

And tells me that frail mortals are no more
Than a vain image and an empty shade.

M I N E R V A.

Let such examples teach thee to beware
Against the Gods ~~thou utter~~ ~~ought~~ profane:
And if perchance in riches or in pow'r
Thou shin'st superior, be not insolent;
For, know, a day ~~fulfill~~ ~~eth~~ to ~~exist~~
Or to depress the state of mortal man:
The wise and good are by the Gods belov'd,
But those, who practice evil, they abhor.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

I.

To thee, O! Ajax, ~~valiant~~ ~~son~~
Of illustrious Telamon,

Monarch

To thee, O! Ajax. The chorus is form'd, with great propriety, of Salaminian soldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who having heard the report, already spread through the army, of Ajax's madness, and the slaughter of the cattle, express the deepest concern for their unhappy master. If the fact asserted was true, such, say they, was the will of the gods who had deprived him of his senses; he is therefore to be pitied, not condemn'd: if, (as they are rather inclined to believe) it was only a story invented by the artful Ulysses, on purpose to calumniate him, it behoved the hero immediately to appear, and contradict it: of this, interspersed with moral reflections, consists the first chorus, which according to the commentators was, a song between the acts; the French call it, intermede: the chorus before us is made up, in the original, of anapæsts, with a strophe, antistrophe, and epode: I have thrown the whole into one irregular ode of eight stanzas, and divided them as the change of sentiment seem'd to point out and direct me; whether it be

Monarch of the sea-girt isle,
 Fair Salamis, if fortune smile.
 On thee, I raise the tributary song,
 For praise and virtue still to thee belong :
 But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove,
 Græcian slander blasts thy fame,
 And foul reproach attaints thy name,
 Then do I tremble like the fearful dove.

II.

So, the last unhappy night,
 Clamours loud did reach mine ear
 And fill'd my anxious heart with fear,
 Which talk'd of Græcian cattle slain,
 And Ajax madd'ning o'er the plain,
 Pleas'd at his prey, rejoycing at the fight.

III.

Thus false Ulysses can prevail,
 Whisp'ring to all his artful tale,
 His tale alas ! too willingly receiv'd ;

Whilst

If fortune smile. The original is *σε μεν ευ πρασσοντ'*, quando bene tecum agitur : -so we say a man *does well*, when he succeeds in the world.

Last unhappy night. Gr. *της φθιμενης νυκτος*, the night that is perish'd ; remarkable Greek idiom.

Whilst those who hear are glad to know
And happy to insult thy woe,
For, who asperse the great are easily believ'd.

IV.

The poor, like us, alone are free
From the darts of calumny,
Whilst envy still attends on high estate:
Small is the aid which we can lend,
Without the rich and pow'rful friend;
The great support the low, the low assist the great.
But 'tis a truth which fools will never know;
From such alone the clamours came
Which strove to hurt thy spotless fame,
Whilst we can only weep, and not relieve thy woe.

V.

Happy to 'scape thy piercing sight,
Behold them wing their rapid flight,
As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly,
Sudden again shou'dst thou appear,
The cowards wou'd be mute with fear,
And all their censures in a moment dye.

VI.

Cynthia, goddess of the grove,
Daughter of immortal Jove,

To

To whom at Tauris frequent altars rise,
 Indignant might inspire the deed,
 And bid the guiltless cattle bleed,
 Depriv'd of incense due, and wonted sacrifice.
 Perhaps, sad cause of all our grief and shame!
 The god of war with brazen shield,
 For fancy'd injuries in the field,
 Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name.

VII.

For never in his perfect mind,
 Had Ajax been to ill inclin'd,
 On flocks and herds his rage had never spent;
 It was inflicted from above:
 May Phœbus and all-powerful Jove
 Avert the crime, or stop the punishment!
 If to th' Atridæ the bold fiction came
 From Sisyphus' detested race,

No

To whom at Tauris &c. Ταυροπολαν, id est, Taurivagam vocant Dianam (says Camerarius) vel quod in Taurica culta fuerit, vel propter terri culamenta nocturna Hecates, vel nescio quam ob causam, that is, they call Diana Ταυροπολα, either because she was worship'd at Tauris, or because of the nocturnal incantations of Hecate, or for I know not what reason (which by the bye is an excellent way of solving the difficulty); the first reason however is most probably the true one, which I have therefore adopted in the translation.

From Sisyphus' detested race. Or, in other words, from Ulysses, whom the chorus means to reproach as the bastard son of Sisyphus; concerning which circumstance

No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy fame.

VIII.

Ajax, thy too long repose
Adds new vigor to thy foes,
As flames from aiding winds still fiercer grow;
Whilst the loose laugh, and shameless lye,
And all their bitter calumny
With double weight opprefs, and fill our hearts with woe.

circumstance, the antients, who had perhaps as well as ourselves a little taste for scandal, tell the following tale; Anticlea, the mother of Ulysses, in her journey towards her betroth'd husband, Laertes, was violently seized on by Sisyphus, king of Corinth, and deflower'd by him. Ulysses was supposed to have been the fruit of this stolen embrace, though Laertes, who afterwards marry'd the lady, was obliged to educate him as his own. There is likewise another story, to be met with in the scholia, of her being prostituted to Sisyphus by her father Autolycus. Both Æschylus and Euripides mention the bastardy of Ulysses; Sophocles also repeats it in the Philoctetes.

End of A C T I.

A C T

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

T E C M E S S A.

S O N S of Erechtheus, of Athenian race,
Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax,
Oppress'd with grief behold a wretched woman
Far from her native soil appointed here
To watch your hapless lord, and mourn his fate.

C H O R U S.

What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?
Say, daughter of Teleutas, for with thee

E

His

Sons of Erechtheus &c. The Athenians, who were remarkably proud of their antiquity, stiled themselves, *χθονιοι* or *αυτοχθονιοι*, as sprung from the Earth; the original natives of that spot; and coeval with the soil they inhabited. Erechtheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcan, and the Earth; from him the Athenians boasted their descent, and they could not well go higher: Salamis was not far from Athens; Sophocles therefore salutes the followers of Ajax by the name of Athenians, and takes this opportunity to indulge the vanity of his countrymen, by calling them the sons of Erechtheus: for joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer;

With these appear the Salaminian bands,
Whom the gigantic Telamon commands;
In twelve black ships, to Troy they steer their course,
And with the great Athenians join their force.

POPE'S HOMER, B. 2. L. 670.

Daughter of Teleutas &c. Tecmeffa, who is here introduced as the wife of Ajax, fell to him, as Briseis to Achilles, by the fate of war: her father
Teleutas

His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns
To share the nuptial bed, and therefore thou
Can'st best inform us.

T E C M E S S A.

Now shall I declare
Sadder than death th' unutterable woe!
This night, with madness seiz'd, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed; within thou may'st behold
The tents o'erspread with bloody carcases
Of cattle slain, the victims of his rage.

C H O R U S.

Sad news indeed thou bring'st of that brave man,
A dire disease! and not by human aid
To be remov'd; already Greece hath heard
And wond'ring crouds repeat the dreadful tale:
Alas! I fear th' event! I fear me much,

Left

Teleutas, was a petty king in Phrygia, whose dominions being taken and plunder'd by Ajax, the daughter became his captive, and was afterwards advanced to his bed, in quality, we may suppose, of his chief sultana; by her, we find, he had a child whom the father named Euryfaces, from *εὐρύς* *σάκος*, a broad shield, in memory of that part of his own armour, by which, as we before observed, he was so eminently distinguish'd; this child is afterwards brought on the stage, a circumstance artfully introduced by the poet, to heighten the distress of the piece. Horace, in his catalogue of famous mistresses, has not forgot our heroine,

Movit Ajacem Telamone natum,
Forma captivæ dominum Tecmessæ.

Lib. 2. Od. 4.

Left with their flocks and herds the shepherds slain,
Against himself he lift his murth'rous hand.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! this way he led his captive spoils,
And some he slew, and others tore in funder;
From out the flock two rams of silver hue
He chose, from one the head and tongue divided,
He cast them from him; then the other chain'd
Fast to the pillar, with a doubled rein
Bore cruel stripes, and bitt'rest execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inspired
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

C H O R U S.

Now then, my friends, (for so the time demands)
Each o'er his head shou'd cast the mournful veil,
And instant fly, or to our ships repair,
And sail with speed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridæ; death may be our lot,
And we shall meet an equal punishment
With him whom we lament, our frantie lord.

T E C M E S S A.

He raves not now; but like the southern blast,
When lightnings cease and all the storm is o'er,
Grows calm again; yet to his sense restor'd,

He feels new griefs ; for, O ! to be unhappy,
And know ourselves alone the guilty cause
Of all our sorrows, is the worst of woes.

C H O R U S.

Yet if his rage subside we shou'd rejoice ;
The ill remov'd, we shou'd remove our care.

T E C M E S S A.

Hadst thou then rather, if the choice were giv'n,
Thyself at ease, behold thy friend in pain,
Than with thy friend be join'd in mutual sorrow ?

C H O R U S.

The double grief is sure the most oppressive.

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore, tho' not distemper'd, I am wretched.

C H O R U S.

I understand thee not.

T E C M E S S A.

The noble Ajax,
Whilst he was mad, was happy in his phrenzy,
And yet the while affected me with grief
Who was not so ; but now his rage is o'er,
And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
Himself is almost dead with grief, and I
Not less unhappy than I was before ;
Is it not doubled then ?

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

It is indeed;

And much I fear the wrath of angry heav'n,
If from his madness ceas'd he yet receive
No kind relief.

T E C M E S S A.

'Tis so; and 'twere most fit
You knew it well.

C H O R U S.

Say then how it began;
For like thyself we feel for his misfortunes.

T E C M E S S A.

Since you partake the sorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all: know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening tapers were expir'd,
Snatching his sword, he seem'd as if he meant
To roam abroad, I saw and chid him for it;
What woud'st thou do, I cry'd, my dearest Ajax?
Unask'd, uncall'd for, whither woud'st thou go?
No trumpet sounds to battle, the whole host
Is wrap'd in sleep; then did he answer me
With brief but sharp rebuke, as he was wont;
Woman, thy sex's noblest ornament
Is silence; thus reprov'd, I said no more;

Then

Then forth he rush'd alone, where, and for what,
 I knew not; but returning, he brought home
 In chains the captive herd, in pieces some
 He tore, whilst others bound like slaves he lash'd
 Indignant; then out at the portal ran,
 And with some shadow seem'd to hold discourse;
 Against th' Atridæ, and Ulysses oft
 Wou'd he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice
 That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs;
 Then back he came; at length, by slow degrees,
 His phrenzy ceas'd; when soon as he beheld
 The tents o'erwhelm'd with slaughter, he cry'd out,
 And beat his brain; roll'd o'er the bloody heaps
 Of cattle slain, and tore his clotted hair,
 Long fix'd in silence: then, with horrid threats
 He bad me tell him all that had befall'n,
 And what he had been doing; I obey'd,
 Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.
 Instant he pour'd forth bitt'rest lamentations,
 Such as I ne'er had heard from him before,

For

With some shadow &c. This alludes to his conversation with Minerva, in the first act; Tecmessa, we may suppose, was in a chamber adjoining to them, and overheard their discourse. But as Minerva had render'd both herself and Ulysses invisible, Tecmessa could not imagine whom he was talking to; she adds this circumstance therefore to the other symptoms of his madness. There is a passage not unlike this in Hamlet. See Act 3. Sc. 10.

For grief like that, he oft wou'd say, betray'd
 A weak and little mind, and therefore ever
 When sorrow came, refrain'd from loud complaint,
 And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourn'd.
 But sinking now beneath this sore distress,
 He will not taste of food or nourishment;
 Silent he sits, amid the slaughter'd cattle,
 Or, if he speaks, utters such dreadful words
 As shew a mind intent on something ill.
 Now then, my friends, for therefore came I hither,
 O! if ye have the pow'r assist me now;
 Perhaps ye may; for oft th' afflicted man
 Will listen to the counsels of a friend.

C H O R U S.

O! daughter of Teleutas, horrible
 Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,
 Thus raving, and thus miserable.

[A J A X within groans]

Oh!

T E C M E S S A.

He will not taste of food. The abstinence of Ajax on this occasion, which, we may imagine, was not peculiar to himself, seems to be among those customs which the Grecians borrow'd from the eastern nations: we read in scripture, that when David was afflicted for the loss of his child, he would not eat bread, nor drink wine; it appears from this, and many other passages in Sophocles, that he was no stranger to the manners and phraseology of the orientals; though I would not, on this occasion, venture to affirm, that David and Sophocles were but one person, in imitation of my learned predecessor, Duport, who so positively asserted, that Homer and Solomon were the same.

T E C M E S S A.

Louder you'll hear him foon; mark'd ye, my friends,
How deep his groans?

A J A X within.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

He seems to rave,
Or mourns reflecting on his madness past.

A J A X within.

Boy, boy!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! he calls Euryfaces,

Where art thou, child? What wou'd he have with thee?

A J A X within.

Teucer, 'tis thee I call, where art thou, Teucer?
Still must he chace his prey, whilst Ajax dyes?

C H O R U S.

He seems of perfect mind—open the doors,
Let him come forth, who knows but fight of us
May keep him so.

T E C M E S S A.

I'll open them——now see

[The doors are thrown open, and Ajax discover'd]

Your master there, and judge of his condition.

S C E N E II.

A J A X, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

A J A X.

My dear companions, who alone deserve
 The name of friends, ye see the dreadful storm
 How it o'erwhelms me.

C H O R U S. [aside to T E C M E S S A.]

What thou said'st, alas!

Was but too true, he seems indeed distracted.

A J A X.

My fellow-sailors! whose assisting hand
 Ply'd the tough oar, and led me thro' the main,
 From you alone can I expect to meet

E *

Or

My dear companions, &c. From line 347 to line 427 of the original, instead of the common metre, it is all strophe and antistrophe, which was most probably set to music and sung in the manner of the chorus: this was often done by Sophocles and the other tragic writers in the more pathetic and impassion'd parts of the drama, and met, as we may imagine, with a favourable reception in the Grecian theatre; but as question and answer put into ode or rhyme would have a different effect amongst us, I have preserved the blank verse in this and some other parallel passages, as more proper for dialogue.

Seems indeed distracted. Ajax is here represented as sitting alone in his tent just recover'd from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it: what the chorus here observes concerning his distraction doth not therefore proceed from any thing which he says, but, probably, from a wildness in his looks and gesture which still remain'd, and induced them to believe that his distemper was not quite removed. Ajax, indeed, as Brumoy observes, seems throughout this whole scene like the sea after a storm, whose waves are still agitated, and subsiding by degrees into calmness and tranquillity.

Or love or friendship; therefore shew it now,
And kill me.

C H O R U S.

Talk not thus, nor thus increase
By added woes thy dreadful malady.

A J A X.

Dost thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for strength renown'd
And dauntless courage in the bloody field,
Dost thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach must he sustain?

T E C M E S S A.

O Ajax,

My lord, my master, do not talk thus sadly.

A J A X to T E C M E S S A.

Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be gone?

T E C M E S S A.

Oh me!

C H O R U S.

Be patient; by the Gods let me intreat you.
Be more compos'd.

A J A X.

Wilt thou not home, &c. The mind of Ajax is so disturb'd that he returns the tenderness of his wife with peevishness and anger. I have endeavour'd in the translation to render it with that brevity and sharpness which passion generally makes use of. The ladies may observe the modesty of Tecmessa's behaviour; she answers him only with a sigh.

A J A X.

27

A J A X.

Wretch that I was, to let
The curst Atridæ scape, and shed the blood
Of harmless cattle!

C H O R U S.

But why forrow thus
For what is past, and cannot be recall'd?

A J A X.

How will that subtle instrument of ill,
Laertes' prying son, insult me now,
And smile at my misfortunes!

C H O R U S.

That must be
As seems most fitting to the Gods; from them
Or grief or joy must flow.

A J A X.

O wou'd to heav'n
That I cou'd see him! wretched as I am!

C H O R U S.

This is no time for boasting: see'st thou not
How very weak thou art?

A J A X.

Almighty Jove,

E * 2

My.

My great progenitor! O grant me this!
 Grant me to slay that hateful, talking slave,
 With the proud princes; then well pleas'd myself
 Shou'd perish last.

T E C M E S S A.

O! if thou pray'ft for death,
 Pray too for mine; for wherefore shou'd I live
 When thou art gone?

A J A X.

O darkness, my best light
 And hope! O wrap me in your friendly shade
 A willing guest! I dare not look for help,
 Or from the Gods above, or men below:
 The pow'rful daughter of eternal Jove
 To death devotes me: whither can I fly,
 Or where remain, my fame and glory lost
 In this sad phrenzy? left without a friend,
 And the whole army bent on my destruction!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear such words,
 Which Ajax never wou'd have spoke before!

A J A X.

Jove, my great progenitor! Ajax's genealogical table stands thus: Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Jupiter therefore was his great grandfather.

A J A X.

Ye well-known floods that roll into the main,
 Ye caves and forests by the rocky shore!
 Years heap'd on Years fast by the walls of Troy
 Have ye detain'd me, but no longer now
 Amongst the living shall ye ever see
 The hapless Ajax; this remember all:
 Now shall thy neighb'ring waves, Scamander, still
 To Greece beneficent, behold me more:
 Troy never saw, forgive the boastful word,
 A braver, nobler foe than Ajax was,
 Tho' now dishonour'd thus, and thus oppress'd.

C H O R U S.

I wou'd not have thee thus lament thy woes,
 And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,
 So hard thy lot.

A J A X.

Who wou'd have thought my name
 Wou'd e'er so well have suited my condition!

Who wou'd have thought my name, &c. To know the meaning of this passage, the reader should understand Greek; it being nothing more than a poor pun on the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with *ai*, an exclamation like our Oh! expressive of pain and sorrow. It is, to say the truth, not very worthy of Sophocles, and much of a piece with Shakespear's,

————— This is Rome indeed,
 And room enough.

JUL. CÆSAR.

But

O! I have reason to lament indeed,
 For sure there is not such a wretch as Ajax!
 Long since at Troy my valiant father fought,
 And to his native land with glory crown'd
 Bore back the meed of his distinguish'd virtues:
 Nor less renown'd for gallant deeds was once
 His hapless son, tho' now he perish thus
 Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know,
 Were he alive, and to bestow his arms
 On him who best deserv'd the prize, to me
 And me alone wou'd judge the great reward:
 But little deem'd th' Atridæ worth like mine,
 And therefore gave them to that vile impostor,
 Author of ev'ry evil work, Ulysses.
 Had not my mind been wrought on by some pow'r
 Superior, and my eyes averted from them,
 They had not liv'd to give another sentence;
 But Jove's great daughter, the invincible,
 The dreadful Pallas, turn'd my arm aside,
 Just rais'd against them, and inspir'd me thus
 With horrid rage to dip my murth'rous hand
 In blood of guiltless cattle: they mean time

Smile

But our Author is not often guilty of this, and should therefore be pardon'd for it. Ovid, who loved trifling, has also play'd upon the name of Ajax. See Met. Lib. 13.

To lament. Another pun; the word *αἰαζειν* signifying to lament.

Smile at the danger scap'd, and triumph o'er me.
But when the Gods oppose us, valour bends
To cowardice, and strength to weakness yields:
What then can Ajax? hateful to the Gods,
By Troy detested, and by Greece forsaken?
Shall I go leave the Atridæ here alone
To fight their cause, and seek my native land?
But how shall I appear before my father?
How will he bear to see his Ajax thus
Spoil'd of his honours! he who ever crown'd
With glory fits; it must not, can not be.
What if I rush amid the Trojan host,
And with my single arm oppose them all,
Do something noble, and as nobly perish?
But that wou'd please th' Atridæ, therefore never
Shall it be done: No. I will do a deed
To shew my father that I still deserve
The name of son, and emulate my fire:
When life but teems with unremitted woes,
'Tis poor in man to wish a longer date:
For what can day on day, and year on year
But put off wish'd-for death, and lengthen pain?
Of little worth is he who still depends
On fruitless hope: for it becomes the brave

To live with honour, or to die with glory.

Ye have my thoughts.

C H O R U S.

Thoughts not unworthy of thee,

Ajax ; but quit, O ! quit thy horrid purpose,

And yield thee to thy friends.

T E C M E S S A.

My lord, my master,

My dearest Ajax, dreadful are the ills

Which cruel fortune brings on human kind :

Of noblest race (a better Phrygia boasts not)

Tecmeffa was, and from a father sprung

Happy and free, tho' now a wretched slave ;

For so the Gods and thy all-conq'ring arm

Decreed : but since partaker of thy bed,

Thou know'st I ever have with tend'rest care

Watch'd o'er thee : therefore, by domestic Jove,

Here I intreat thee, by the sacred tye

That binds us, let me not with foul reproach

And

My lord, my master, &c. This speech of Tecmeffa's has been deservedly applauded by the critics as one of the most masterly and pathetic in the whole tragedy. Ce ne font pas (says Brumoy) de ces sentimens delicats & recherchéz qu'on a mis depuis à la mode sur le théâtre ; ce sont les expressions vives de l'amitié conjugal. This scene, as well as that which follows between Ajax and his son, is manifestly imitated from the parting of Hector and Andromache in the 6th book of Homer's Iliad, to which I refer my readers. The copy is not, perhaps, much inferior to the original.

And bitter scorn be taunted by thy foes,
 When they surround me, as I know they will:
 For O! when thou shalt die, that very day
 The Greeks with violence will seize on me;
 Tecmeffa then and thy lov'd son shall eat
 The bread of slav'ry; then some haughty lord
 Insulting loud, shall cry, behold the wife
 Of Ajax, once the pride of all our host,
 How is she fall'n! from envy'd happiness
 To servitude and woe! such vile upbraidings
 Oft shall I hear, on thee and on thy race
 Casting foul shame: O! then relent, my Ajax;
 Think on thy father in the vale of years,
 Think on thy aged mother, who with vows
 Incessant prays the Gods to send thee back
 Safe to thy native land: pity thy son,
 Without a father in his tender youth
 To form his mind, left to th' unfriendly hands
 Of those who love him not: Alas! what woes
 Wilt thou bequeath to me and to thy child!
 I have no hope, no stay but thee alone.
 Thy hand destroy'd my country, and my mother;

F

Death

The bread of slav'ry. This is literally translated; the expression is much in the stile of the scriptures, where we meet with the bread of sorrow, the bread of wickedness, the bread of sincerity, and the like.

Death snatch'd my father to the realms below ;
 Depriv'd of thee what country will receive me,
 Or where shall I subsist ? Thou art my all,
 My only safe-guard : do not, do not leave me !
 Nought so becomes a man as gratitude
 For good receiv'd, and noble deeds are still
 The offspring of benevolence, whilst he
 With whom remembrance dies of blessings past
 Is vile and worthless.

C H O R U S.

O ! that thou cou'dst feel
 Pity like mine for this unhappy woman !
 Then wou'dst thou say her words deserve thy praise.

A J A X.

And prais'd she shall be if she but perform
 What I require.

T E C M E S S A.

In all will I obey thee,
 My dearest Ajax !

A J A X.

I wou'd see my child ;
 Let him be brought.

T E C M E S S A.

I hid him from thy sight
 Because of——

A J A X.

A J A X.

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A J A X.

My distemper, was it not?

T E C M E S S A.

It was: I fear'd indeed thou might'st destroy him:

A J A X.

And well thou might'st: a deed like that became
My sad condition.

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore to prevent it
I kept him from thee.

A J A X.

I approve thy caution.

T E C M E S S A.

What wou'dst thou have me do?

A J A X.

Let me behold
And speak to him.

T E C M E S S A.

He is not far from hence,
The servants have him in their care.

A J A X.

Then why
May I not see him?

A J A X.

T E C M E S S A.

Boy! thy father calls thee:
Let some one bring him hither.

A J A X.

Is he coming,
Or doth not hear thee?

T E C M E S S A.

They have brought him to thee.

[Enter servant with EURYSACES.]

S C E N E III.

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

A J A X.

Bring him this way: for if he be the son
Of Ajax, the fresh blood that hangs about me
Will not affright him; he must learn like me
In earliest years the savage laws of war,
And be inur'd to scenes of death and slaughter:
May'st thou, my boy, be happier than thy father!
In all things else it will be no disgrace
To copy me: I envy thee, my child,
For that thou see'st not thy own wretchedness;
The happiness of life is not to know.
Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain,
Till time shall teach thee what it is to grieve

And

And to rejoice ; then must thou shew thy foes
 From whom thou art descended : may the breath
 Of life mean time nourish thy tender frame,
 That thou may'st prove a comfort to thy mother !
 I know there's not a Grecian that will dare
 Insult thee, when thy father is no more ;
 For I shall leave thee to the best of guardians,
 The faithful Teucer, who far from thee now
 Sent forth by Greece repels th' invading foe.
 Of you, my friends, companions of the war,
 The only boon I ask is, that ye urge
 This last request to Teucer, say, I begg'd
 That strait to Telamon and Eriboea,
 My aged parents, he wou'd bear my child,
 To be the joy of their declining years,
 Till death shall call them to the shades below :
 Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague
 Ulysses, e'er be made the prize of glory
 For rival chiefs : but do thou take, my boy,

[turning to EURYSACES.]

The sev'nfold, vast, impenetrable shield
 Whose name thou bear'st ; the rest be bury'd with me.

Take

The rest be bury'd with me. The custom of burying the arms of deceased warriors in the same grave with them is very antient, and is practised amongst the Indians.

Take hence the child with speed ; nor in the tents
 Let there be wailings : Women ever love
 To brood o'er sorrows, and indulge their woe.
 Shut to the door. The wound that must be cut
 No wise physician will attempt to heal
 With incantation, elegy, or song.

C H O R U S.

I tremble when I hear thee threat'ning thus
 With sharp and piercing voice.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! my lord,
 What wilt thou do?

A J A X.

Guess not; inquire not of me;
 Be silent, and be wise; it will become thee.

T E C M E S S A.

How am I tortur'd! by the Gods I beg thee,
 By our dear child, do not destroy us both.

A J A X.

Indians at this day. This whole speech of Ajax, it is observed by the commentators, carries with it the air and form of his last will and testament; he gives orders to his wife and family as a man immediately about to quit the world: this raises the passion of pity in the spectators, and prepares them for the catastrophe.

Incantation, elegy, and song. The Greek word *ερωδη* is here used by Sophocles for a charm or incantation, a method of curing diseases frequently made use of by the ancients.

A J A X.

Thou dost perplex me ; why revere the Gods ?
I am not bound to't ; for I owe them nothing.

T E C M E S S A.

Be not so impious.

A J A X.

Talk to those will hear thee.

T E C M E S S A.

Art thou resolv'd then ?

A J A X.

'Tis too much ; thy grief

Grows troublesome.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas ! my lord, I fear——

A J A X

[to the CHORUS.

Will ye not take her hence ?

T E C M E S S A.

O ! by the Gods

I beg thee be persuaded.

A J A X.

Thou art mad

To think thy words will ever change my purpose. [Exeunt

O D . E.

Change my purpose. Ajax, we must here suppose, breaks from Tecmessa and retires : she goes out, and the chorus remains on the stage to lament their own unhappy condition, and express their fears for Ajax.

A J A X.

O D E.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

O happiest, best abode, my native isle,

Fair Salamis, encompass'd by the sea,
On thee whilst Gods and men indulgent smile,
My country, O behold and pity me!

A long long time on Ida's plain,
Thus doom'd inglorious to remain,
While circling years roll o'er my wretched head
New terrors still affright me here,
Still is my heart appall'd with fear,
Lest I shou'd visit soon the mansions of the dead.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

The woes of Ajax too imbitter mine,
The bravest leader of the Grecian host,
Untimely visited by wrath divine,
And in the desp'rate, cruel phrenzy lost.

There was a time when sent by thee
He gain'd the wreath of victory,
Tho' now his weeping friends lament his fall:

Th'

Th' ungrateful chiefs revere no more
 The virtues they admir'd before ;
 His gallant deeds are now forgotten all.

S T R O P H E II.

Weigh'd down with years, when thou in hoary age,
 Unhappy mother, shalt these tidings hear
 Of thy dear Ajax, and his cruel rage,
 How wilt thou weep and wail with grief sincere!

Not like the plaintive nightingale
 That warbles sweet her tender tale,
 But with loud shrieks of horrible despair :
 With sharpest anguish fore oppress'd,
 Then shalt thou beat thy aged breast,
 And in deep sorrow rend thy wild dishevell'd hair.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

'Tis better far to die than, hopeless still
 Of cure, to languish under sore disease ;
 When mortals suffer such distinguish'd ill
 The silent tomb is liberty and ease.

Ajax, the pride of all our host,
 His antient fame and glory lost,
 Sinks down at last o'erwhelm'd with foul disgrace :

How will his hapless father bear
 His son's distressful fate to hear,
 Ev'n such as never fell on Æacus his race!

End of A C T II.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

A J A X, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

A J A X.

STILL are the secret things of man reveal'd,
 And what is known, again in darkness hid
 By endless and immeasurable time;
 And nothing is there but in length of days
 May come to pass; ev'n sacred oaths are broken,
 And the fix'd mind perverse and obstinate
 Subdu'd by time: I, who like harden'd steel

Was

Act 3. Brumoy, in opposition to all the critics, translators and commentators, and without assigning any reason, extends this act to the end of the next chorus, and begins the third with the arrival of the messenger from Teucer; which makes the division of the acts very unequal, the second containing, in the original, upwards of five hundred lines, and the third not above one; but, as I observed in the dissertation, the custom of mincing the antient tragedy into five acts is merely arbitrary, and without any foundation, as it was most probably one continued act extending itself through the whole Drama.

Was late inflexible, am soften'd now
To pity and remorse by this dear woman ;
I cannot bear to leave her here a widow
Amidst her foes, or to forsake my child,
A helpless orphan : No ; I will retire
Along the shore, and seek the running stream,
Avert the wrath of angry heav'n, and wash
My crimes away ; there haply shall I find
Some unfrequented spot where I may hide
This fatal weapon, this destructive sword ;
O ! I will bury't deep in earth, that none
May see it more, but night and Erebus
Preserve it still from ev'ry mortal eye :
E'er since that hapless day, when from the hand
Of Hector I receiv'd this dreadful boon,
Nought have I had from Greece but pain and woe :
True is the adage, "from the hands of foes
Gifts are not gifts, but injuries most fatal."
Hereafter will I yield me to the Gods
And the Atridæ ; since they are my masters,
'Tis meet that I obey them : all that's strong
And mighty must submit to pow'rs superior :

G 2.

Doth

This fatal weapon. Ajax, who is secretly resolved to destroy himself, says this to prevent the suspicions of his wife and friends from his carrying his sword out with him : the spectators plainly see his intent by his industry to conceal it.

Doth not the snowy winter to the bloom
Of fruitful summer yield? and night obscure,
When by white steeds Aurora drawn lights up
The rising day, submissively retire?
The roaring sea, long vex'd by angry winds,
Is lull'd by milder zephyrs to repose,
And oft the fetters of all-conqu'ring sleep
Are kindly loos'd to free the captive mind:
From nature then, who thus instructs mankind,
Why should not Ajax learn humility?
Long since I knew to treat my foe like one
Whom I hereafter as a friend might love
If he deserved it, and to love my friend
As if he still might one day be my foe:
For little is the trust we can repose
In human friendships: but to my intent;
Go thou, Tecmessa, and beseech the Gods
To grant what I request: do you perform
The same kind office; and when Teucer comes,
Tell him, the care of me and of my friends
I leave to him: whither I must, I must:

Obey

Long since I knew, &c. Tully in his *Lælius*, five de Amicitia, disclaims this selfish and worldly maxim as destructive of all friendship. The saying is generally attributed to the celebrated Bias, one of the seven sages of Greece.

Obey my orders: wretched as I am
 Soon shall ye see me freed from all my woes. [Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E

Now let sounds of mirth and joy
 Ev'ry blisful hour employ:
 Borne on pleasure's airy wing
 Io Pan! to thee we sing:
 Thee, whom on the rocky shore
 Wreck-scap'd mariners adore,
 Skill'd the mazy dance to lead,
 Teach, O! teach our feet to tread
 The round which Cretan Cnossus knows,
 At Nyssa which spontaneous rose;
 Pan, O! guide this tuneful throng,
 While to thee we raise the song,
 From Cyllene's snowy brow,
 King of pleasures, hear us now!

Soon shall ye see me, &c. The expression, we may observe, is ambiguous, and the sense left doubtful on purpose to deceive the chorus, who misunderstanding him, immediately on his leaving them break out into a song of joy on his recovery. This (besides, as the commentators have remark'd) gives time for Ajax to retire before the arrival of the messenger.

From thy mountain O! appear!

Joy and happiness are here:

And do thou, O! Delian king,

Now thy aid propitious bring!

O! from the Icarian sea

Come, Apollo, smile on me.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

All our sorrows now are o'er,

Grief and madness are no more:

See, the happy day appears,

Mighty Jove! that ends our fears;

Let us, free from every care,

Gladly to our ships repair:

Ajax now in sweet repose

Sinks, forgetful of his woes;

Humbly to the Gods resign'd,

He devotes his better mind:

Time, that withers, can restore

Human pleasures: now no more

Must we say our vows are vain;

Nought unhop'd for shou'd remain;

Since beyond our wishes see

Ajax from his madness free;

'Gainst th' Atridæ all his rage
 See how milder thoughts affwage,
 Bitter strife and quarrels cease,
 All is harmony and peace.

S C E N E III.

M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

My friends, I bear you news of highest import;
 From Myfia's rocky mountains hither comes
 The noble Teucer; know, ev'n now I saw him
 Amid the Grecian host, who, as he came,
 Surrounded, and on ev'ry side pour'd forth
 Reproaches on him; not a man but cry'd
 Behold the brother of that frantic foe
 To Greece and to her counfels: such their rage
 That they had well-nigh ston'd him; swords were drawn,
 And dire had been the conflict, but that some
 Among the aged chiefs by calm advice
 Appeas'd the strife: but where is Ajax gone?
 That I may tell him: from our masters nought
 Shou'd be conceal'd.

C H O R U S.

He is not now within,

But

But just step forth, as if on some new act
Intent, well-fitted to his better mind.

M E S S E N G E R.

Alas! too late did Teucer send me here,
Or I am come too slowly.

C H O R U S.

Why regret

His absence thus?

M E S S E N G E R.

'Twas Teucer's strict command
He shou'd be kept within the tent, nor stir
Till he arriv'd,

C H O R U S.

But, to his sense restor'd,
He went to deprecate the wrath divine
And expiate his offence.

M E S S E N G E R.

Thy words are vain,
If Chalcas prophecy aright.

C H O R U S.

What then

Did Chalcas say? Dost thou know aught of this?

M E S S E N G E R.

Thus far I know, for I was witness of it:

Chalcas

Chalcas, retiring from th' assembled chiefs
Apart from the Atridæ, gently prefs'd
The hand of Teucer, and in tend'rest friendship
Besought him that by ev'ry human art
And means to be devis'd, he wou'd prevent
Ajax his wand'ring forth this fatal day,
If he did ever wish to see him more:
This day alone, he said, Minerva's wrath
Wou'd last against him: oft the mighty fall
In deep affliction, smit by angry heav'n,
When mortal-born to human laws they yield not
As mortals ought, submissively: thus spake
The prophet, and long since was Ajax deem'd
To have a mind disturb'd: when first he left
His native soil, be conqu'ror, O! my child,
His father said, but conquer under God;
Impious and proud his answer was; the worst
Of men, he cry'd, assisted by the Gods
May conquer, I shall do the work without them;
Such were his boastings: and when Pallas once
With kind assistance urg'd him to the fight,
Dreadful and horrible was his reply;
Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid,
'Tis needless here; for know, where Ajax is

The foe will never come: by words like these,
 And pride ill-suited to a mortal's pow'r,
 Did he offend the vengeful deity;
 But if he lives, we may preserve him still,
 The Gods assisting; so the prophet spake;
 And Teucer bade me say, you all shou'd try
 To keep him here; but if that cannot be,
 And Chalcas judge aright, he is no more.

CHORUS. [to TECMESSA within.]

What ho! Tecmeffa! most unhappy woman!
 Come forth and hear the tidings that he brings,
 They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

SCENE IV.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

Scarce do I breathe from still-repeated woes,
 And now again thou call'st me; wherefore? speak.

CHORUS.

This messenger hath brought us dreadful news
 Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TECMESSA.

O! what is it?

Am I undone?

MESSENGER

A J A X.

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M E S S E N G E R.

I know not what thou art;
But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears
Are great for him.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! he is: but, why?
How thou afflict'st me!

M E S S E N G E R.

Teucer hath forbid
His wand'ring thus alone.

T E C M E S S A.

But why forbid him?
And where is Teucer?

M E S S E N G E R.

He will soon be here:
He fears this fatal day.

T E C M E S S A.

Undone Tecmessa!
Whence are his fears? Who told him 'twou'd be fatal?

M E S S E N G E R.

Thestorian Chalcas did foretel, this day
To life or death wou'd fix the fate of Ajax.

T E C M E S S A. [to the C H O R U S.]

Assist me, friends, in this distressful hour.

To Teucer haste, and bring him to my aid;
 Some to yon western mountain bend your way,
 And some to th' east; find out which path he went:
 Unhappy wand'rer! O! he has deceiv'd me,
 His former love forgotten all and gone!
 What must we do, my child? I must not sit
 Inactive here; no, wherefo'er I can
 I'll go to search him: let us haste, my friends,
 Quick, fly this instant, if we mean to save
 The wretched Ajax rushing on destruction.

C H O R U S.

Behold us ready, not in word alone,
 But bent with speed to follow thee. Away.

[Exeunt.]

End of A C T III.

A C T

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

A J A X.

TH E R E stands my sword, and fix'd as it may best
Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector,
My worst of foes, whom I detested ever:
The steel-devouring stone hath sharpen'd well
Its keenest edge; bury'd in Trojan earth
It lyes, and now in kindness seems prepar'd
To end my wretched life; thus far is well:
And now, O! Jove, for first to thee 'tis fit
We pay due honours, I address my pray'r;
I ask not much; I ask thee but to send
Some passing stranger here to bear the news
Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear,
That he may first behold, and take me hence,
Lest by my foes discover'd, I be cast
A prey to dogs and birds; forbid it, Jove!
Thee too, great leader of departed souls,
Terrestrial Hermes, thee I call, O! hear me;
With easy steps, and swift, conduct me safe
To my abode, soon as this fatal sword
Shall reach my breast; and you, ye virgin pow'rs,

From whom whate'er befalls of human ill
Cannot be hid, ye goddeses rever'd,
Swift to pursue the guilty, O! behold
The wretched Ajax by th' Atridæ fall!
O! seize the murth'ers! by my own sad hand
As I shall perish, let my foes be slain
By those whom most they love! quick, fly, begone,
Ye vengeful furies, gorge yourselves in blood,
Nor spare a man of all the Grecian host;
And thou, O! sun, who driv'st thy flaming car
Along the vaulted sky, when thou shalt see
My native foil, O! stop thy golden reins;
Tell the sad story to my hapless fire,
And my afflicted mother; when she hears
The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain
To weep my fate: the business must be done.
O! death, look on me, death; I come to thee:
Soon shall we meet, but thee, O! glorious day,
And yon bright charioteer the sun, no more
Shall I behold, ev'n now thou hear'st my last
My dying words: O! light, O! sacred foil
Of Salamis, my country, and her gods,
O! noble Athens, O! my lov'd companions,

Ye

Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy,
 And you my honour'd parents, O! farewell!
 'Tis the last word Ajax shall speak on earth.
 The rest be utter'd to the shades below.

[AJAX falls on his sword and dies.]

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

Labour on labour! toil on toil! O whither
 Have we not wander'd? yet no place informs us
 Where Ajax is: but soft, I hear a voice.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

'Twas ours, your friends.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

What news?

S E M I C H O R U S II.

We've search'd along

The western shore.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

And is he found?

S E M I-

The Chorus who had been in search of Ajax enter at different parts of the stage, having divided themselves into two parts, the better to discover him; they meet as it were by chance, and ask each other concerning him.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

Alafs!

We met with nought but toil; no fight of him.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

We from the east return with like success;
For none have seen or heard of him that way.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

Who will inform us? who will say
Where cruel Ajax bent his way?
Will not the watchful hind, who void of sleep
Hangs laborious o'er the deep?
From high Olympus will no pitying god,
Will no kind Naiad of the flood,
If chance they see the cruel Ajax stray,
Tell us where he bent his way?
For O! 'tis dreadful weary'd thus to rove,
Whilst all our pains successless prove,
To reach the destin'd goal, or find the man we love.

T E C M E S S A.

[from within]

Alafs! alafs!

S E M I C H O R U S I.

Hark! from the neighb'ring grove
I heard a voice.

S E M I-

S E M I C H O R U S II.

It is the wretched captive,
The wife of Ajax, the poor sad Tecmessa.

S C E N E III.

T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

T E C M E S S A.

O! I am lost, my friends, undone, destroy'd!

C H O R U S.

Ha! what hath happen'd?

T E C M E S S A.

Ajax lies before me,
Slain by the sword which he had bury'd here.

C H O R U S.

Fatal fure was our return,
Thy untimely death to mourn,
Me, and all thy faithful train,
Cruel Ajax, hast thou slain,

I

Sad

O! I am lost, &c. Tecmessa, as well as the Chorus, alarm'd by the prophecy of Chalcas as recounted by the messenger, had been in search of her husband, and on her return stumbles on his body; the Chorus, we must suppose, are at the forepart of the stage, and Tecmessa at the back, in the place where Ajax had fall'n upon his sword. The Chorus here, agreeable to what I before observed was customary in the impassion'd parts of the drama, sing in strophe and antistrophe: I have therefore put it into rhyme, the better to distinguish it.

Sad event alas! to me!

Sadder, woman, still to thee.

T E C M E S S A.

O! I have reason now to weep indeed.

C H O R U S.

What hand perform'd the horrid deed?

T E C M E S S A.

His own,

Doubtless it was: the sword he fell upon,
Here, fix'd in earth, declares it must be so.

[Approaching towards the body.]

C H O R U S.

Alone without one pitying friend,
Cam'st thou to this dreadful end?
Was I not myself to blame,
Who neglectful never came?
Bring him, Tecmeffa, to my eyes,
Tell me, where thy Ajax lies.

T E C M E S S A.

He is not to be seen: this folded garment
Shall hide the horrid sight: a sight no friend
Wou'd wish to see; whilst from his nostrils streams
The black blood, more still issuing from the wound
Made by his own destructive hand: O! me!

What

What must I do? what friend will raise him up?
 O! where is Teucer? he shou'd have been here
 To pay his last sad duty to a brother:
 O! wretched Ajax! but to think, alas!
 What once thou hast been, and what now thou art,
 Thy very foes must sure lament thy fate.

C H O R U S.

Ajax, long since in thy obdurate mind,
 Thy sad purpose was design'd;
 Long since wert thou resolv'd to seek repose,
 From thy never-ceasing woes;
 This from the daily sigh, the nightly tear,
 This from thy sorrows did I fear;
 This from thy hate which nought cou'd e'er assuage;
 And 'gainst th' Atridæ all thy rage:
 For never did thy soul contentment know,
 But still with fiercest indignation glow,
 Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe.

T E C M E S S A.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

Alas! I know the wound must pierce
 Thy inmost soul.

T E C M E

Unhappy

C H O R

O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy,
Bereav'd of such a friend.

T E C M E S S A.

Thou but believ'st it,
I am too certain; for I feel it here.

C H O R U S.

I know thou dost.

T E C M E S S A.

What fervitude, my child,
Must we endure? who will protect us now?

C H O R U S.

Doubtless thy fears of future pain,
From the Atridæ all are vain,
For never can they mean such ills to thee;
Unfeeling they of human woe,
Nor love nor piety cou'd know;
May heav'n avert the sad calamity!

T E C M E S S A.

The gods ordain'd it, and it must be so.

C H O R U S.

But he hath suffer'd more than he deserv'd.

TECMESSA.

Jove's dreadful doom has so decreed
His fate, to gratify Ulysses.

CHORUS.

Ulysses, ever pleas'd to see
His madness, now will smile at thee,
Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine:
By him the curs'd Atridæ led,
Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead,
And in the cruel mirth with pleasure join.

TECMESSA.

Let them rejoice, let them insult him now
With savage joy, but when the dreadful day
Of battle comes, whom living they despis'd,
When dead they shall lament: fools never know
The treasure's value, till the treasure's lost:
But far more bitter was his death to me
Than sweet to them: to Ajax 'twas most welcome;
Death was his only wish, and he obtain'd it:
Then wherefore shou'd they triumph? by the hand
Of heav'n, and not by theirs my Ajax fell.
Then let Ulysses smile: he is not theirs,
He lives not for the Grecians; he is gone,
And has bequeath'd his sorrows all to me.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

T E U C E R, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Alas ! alas !

C H O R U S.

Hark ! 'tis the voice of Teucer
In mournful sighs lamenting our sad fate.

T E U C E R.

O ! Ajax, is it so ? my dearest brother,
Dear as these eyes to me, hath fame said true,
And art thou gone ?

C H O R U S.

O ! Teucer, he is dead.

T E U C E R.

Unhappy fate !

C H O R U S.

'Tis so indeed.

T E U C E R.

Alas !

Wretch that I am.

C H O R U S.

O ! thou hast cause to weep.

T E U C E R

T E U C E R.

Dreadful calamity!

C H O R U S.

It is indeed

Too much to bear.

T E U C E R.

O! wretched, wretched Teucer!

Where is the child? is he at Troy?

C H O R U S.

Alone

And in the tent.

T E U C E R.

Will ye not bring him to me,

Left he shou'd fall a victim to the foe?

Ev'n as the hunters seize the lion's whelp

Left to its helpless dam: quick! fly! assist me,

For all are glad to triumph o'er the dead.

C H O R U S.

To thee, O! Teucer, he bequeath'd the care

Of his lov'd child, and thou obey'ft him well.

T E U C E R.

O Ajax! never did these eyes behold

A fight so dreadful; came I then for this

With luckless speed? O! melancholy journey!

To seek thee long in vain, and thus at last
To find thee dead before me, O! my brother!
Quick through the Grecian host, as if some god
Had brought the tidings, spread the dire report
Of thy untimely fate; far from thee then
I heard and wept, but now, alas! I see
And am undone; my best, my dearest Ajax!
Unveil the body; let me view it well,
And count my miseries; horrid spectacle!
O! rash advent'rous deed! what weight of woe
Thy death has laid on me! alas! to whom
Or whither shall I go? O! wherefore, Teucer,
Wert thou not here to stop a brother's hand?
What will our poor unhappy father say,
The wretched Telamon, will he receive me
With looks of love and pleasure, when I come
Without his Ajax? O! he never will.
Ev'n in the best of times he was not wont
To smile, or joy in aught. What then will now
His anger vent? will he not speak of me
As of a faithless base unworthy son,
The spurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betray'd and slain his best-lov'd Ajax
To gain his fair possessions after death?

Thus

Thus will his wrath, sharpen'd by peevish age,
 Upbraid me guiltless; and to slav'ry doom'd
 A wretched exile from his native land
 Shall Teucer wander forth: such dreadful ills
 Must I expect at home: at Troy my foes
 Are num'rous, and my friends alas how few!
 Thou art the cause of all: for O! my Ajax,
 What shall I do? how can I save thee now
 From this sad fate? O! who could have foreseen
 That Hector, long since dead, at last should prove
 The murtherer of Ajax? By the gods
 I do beseech you, mark the fate of both:
 The belt, which Ajax ~~did~~ to Hector give,
 Dragg'd the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field
 Till he expir'd; and now behold the sword,
 Which Hector gave to Ajax, is the cause
 Of Ajax' death: Erynnis' self did forge
 The fatal steel, and Pluto made the belt;
 Dreadful artificer! But this, and all
 That happens to us, is the work of heav'n.
 If there be those who doubt it, let them hold
 Their diff'ring judgments, I shall keep my own.

C H O R U S.

Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare
 To bury Ajax, and defend thy self

Against thy foe, whom yonder I behold
 This way advancing, with malignant smile,
 And looks of ill intent.

TEUCER.

Who can it be?

From th' army, think'st thou?

CHORUS.

'Tis the man whose cause
 We came to fight, ev'n Menelaus.

TEUCER.

'Tis so.

As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

SCENE V.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

MENELAUS.

Stop there; to thee I speak; let go the body,
 I will not have it touch'd.

TEUCER.

Why touch it not?

MENELAUS.

Because it is my will, and his who leads
 The Grecian host.

TEUCER.

T E U C E R.

But wherefore is it so?

M E N E L A U S.

Greece fondly hoped that she had brought a friend,
 And firm ally, but by experience found
 That Troy herself was not so much our foe
 As Ajax was, who nightly wander'd forth
 With deadliest rage to murder all our host,
 And, but some god did frustrate his intent,
 The fate himself hath met had been our own;
 Then had he triumph'd; but the gods ordain'd
 It shou'd not be; and 'gainst the flocks and herds
 Turn'd all his fury: there lives not
 A man of courage or of pow'r sufficient
 To bury Ajax: on the yellow shore
 He shall be cast; to be the food of birds
 That wander there: thou may'st resent it too,
 But t'will be vain; at least we will command
 When dead, whom living we cou'd ne'er subdue,
 Nor ask thy leave: he never wou'd submit,
 But now he must: yield therefore, or we force thee.
 'Tis the Plebeian's duty to obey
 The voice of those who bear authority,
 And he who doth not is the worst of men;

For never can the state itself support
By wholesome laws, where there is no submission :
An army's best defence is modest fear
And rev'rence of its leaders, without these
It cannot conquer : it becomes a man
How great foe'er his strength, still to remember
A little, very little, may destroy him.
He who is guarded by humility
And conscious shame, alone in safety lives ;
But where licentious freedom and reproach
Injurious reign, each as his will directs
Still acting, know, that city soon must fall
From all its bliss, and sink in deepest woe.
Remember then, respect is due to me.
Let us not think when pleasure is enjoy'd
We must not suffer too, and taste of pain ;
For these to mortals still alternate rise.
There liv'd not one so proud and arrogant
As Ajax was : I will be haughty now ;
It is my turn : take heed then, touch him not,
Left, while thou striv'st to bury him, thyself
Shou'd drop into the tomb.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

O! Menelaus,

Do not with maxims grave, and wisdom's rules
Mix foul reproach and slander on the dead.

T E U C E R.

It shou'd not move our wonder, O! my friends,
To see the vulgar err, of meaner souls,
And birth obscure, when men so nobly born
Will talk thus basely: tell me, Menelaus,
For 'twas thy first assertion, didst thou bring
Our Ajax here to help the Grecian host,
Or came he hither by himself alone
Conducted? whence is thy command o'er him,
Or these his followers? who gave thee pow'r,
Who gave thee right? thou may'st be Sparta's king,
But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law
No more to thee than thou wert bound to Ajax;
Thyself no gen'ral, but to others here
Subjected, therefore lord it where thou may'st;
Command thy slaves, go, threaten, and chastise them;
But I will bury Ajax, spite of thee,
And of thy Brother, for I heed thee not:
He fail'd not here to quarrel for the wife
Of Menelaus, like a hireling slave,

But

But to fulfill the strictly-binding oath
 Which he had sworn; he did not come for thee;
 For he despis'd so poor a cause; he came
 With all his heralds, and a num'rous train,
 And brought his captains too; remember therefore
 Thy clamours ne'er shall turn me from my purpose,
 Whilst thou art what thou art.

M E N E L A U S.

A tongue like thine
 But ill becomes thy state: 'tis most unseemly.

T E U C E R.

A keen reproach with justice on its side
 Is always grating.

M E N E L A U S.

This proud archer here
 Talks loudly.

T E U.

Strictly-binding oath, &c. Tyndarus, the father of the fair Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them soever the happy lot should fall to marry her, the rest should unite in his defence, and, in case of any attempt to carry her off, should join their forces to recover her. The event justify'd the necessity of this oath. Teucer therefore tells Menelaus, that it was not any personal regard to him which induced Ajax to join the army, but his resolution to fulfil this solemn engagement.

This proud archer, &c. The foot-soldiers among the Grecians were divided into the *ψιλλοι* and the *επιλται*. The *επιλται* or armed soldiers, bore heavy armour, engaging with broad shields, and long spears: Whereas the *ψιλλοι* or light armed men fought with arrows, and darts, or sometimes stones and slings, annoying their enemies at a distance, like our modern Indians, but unfit for close fights.

TEUCER.

'Tis no mean illib'ral art.

MENELAUS.

If thou could'st bear a shield, how insolent
And haughty woud'st thou be! when naked thus
Thou boast'st thy valour.

TEUCER.

Naked as I am
I shou'd not fly from thee with all thy arms.

MENELAUS.

Thy tongue but speaks thy pride.

TEUCER.

I shou'd be proud
When I am just.

MENELAUS.

Doth justice bid me love
Him who destroy'd me?

TEUCER.

Art thou then destroy'd?
'That's strange indeed, living and dead at once.

MENE-

fight: these, to which Teucer belonged, were inferior in honour and dignity to the heavy-armed soldiers; Menelaus therefore reproaches him as a man of no rank, alluding probably to the custom among the *ψιλοι* of shooting their arrows, and then retiring behind the shields of the heavy-armed for protection. Homer, whom Sophocles never loses sight of, describes Teucer acting in this manner. See the 8th book of the Iliad.

M E N E L A U S.

For him I had been so: the gods preserv'd me.

T E U C E R.

Do not dishonour then the pow'rs divine
That sav'd thee?

M E N E L A U S.

Do I violate their laws?

T E U C E R.

If thou forbid'st the burial of the dead
Thou dost offend the gods.

M E N E L A U S.

He was my foe,

And therefore I forbid it.

T E U C E R.

Art thou sure

That Ajax ever was thy foe?

M E N E L A U S.

I am:

Our hate was mutual, and thou know'st the cause.

T E U C E R.

Because thou wert corrupted, thy false voice
Condemn'd him.

M E N E.

Thy false voice, &c. The Scholiasts on this place inform us that in the famous contest between Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles, the former lost them by the casting vote of Menelaus.

A J A X.

73

M E N E L A U S.

'Twas the judges' fault, not mine.

T E U C E R.

Thus may'st thou screen a thousand injuries.

M E N E L A U S.

Some one may suffer for this insolence.

T E U C E R.

Not more perhaps than others.

M E N E L A U S.

This alone

Remember, bury'd he shall never be.

T E U C E R.

Do thou remember too, I say, he shall.

M E N E L A U S.

So have I seen a bold imperious man
With froward tongue, before the storm began,
Urging the tardy mariner to fail,
But when the tempest rose, no more was heard
The coward's voice, but wrap'd beneath his cloak
Silent he laid, and suffer'd ev'ry foot
To trample on him; thus it is with thee,
And thy foul tongue: forth from a little cloud
Soon as the storm shall burst, it will o'erwhelm thee,
And stop thy clamours.

L

T E U.

T E U C E R.

I too have beheld

A man with folly swol'n reproach his friends

Oppress'd with sore calamity, when strait

One came like me, with indignation fir'd,

Saw, and address'd him thus, "cease, shameless wretch,

"Nor thus oppress the dead; for, if thou dost,

"Remember thou shalt suffer for thy crime:"

Thus spake he to the weak insulting fool;

Methinks I see him here; it must be he,

Ev'n Menelaus; have I guess'd aright?

M E N E L A U S.

'Tis well; I'll leave thee: 'tis a folly thus

To talk with those whom we have pow'r to punish.

[Exit.

S C E N E VI.

T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Away, this babbler is not to be borne.

C H O R U S.

Weak insulting fool, &c. There is something in the raillery of this scene which will probably appear very rough, when compared with the refinement of modern manners: The heroes of Sophocles, like those of Homer, are not remarkable for their delicacy. "Il faut convenir (says Brumoy) que les heros Grecs se traitent un peu à la Grecque, c'est à-dire, assez incivilement; mais telle étoit la maniere d'une nation d'ailleurs si polie; cela n'est pas pour nous plaire aujourd'hui."

C H O R U S.

The contest will grow warm: O! Teucer, haste,
 Prepare some hollow fofs for the remains
 Of Ajax, raife him there a monument,
 By after ages ne'er to be forgotten.

T E U C E R.

And, lo! in happy hour this way advancing
 The wife and fon of our unhappy friend,
 To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb:

S C E N E VII.

T E C M E S S A, E U R Y S A C E S,

T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Come hither, boy, bend down and touch thy father;
 There fit, and holding in thy hands this hair
 And hers and thine, the suppliant's humble treasure,
 Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father:
 If from yon hostile camp the foe shou'd come
 To drive thee hence, far from his native land,

L 2

Whoe'er

Holding in thy hands &c. It was customary among the Grecians on the death of friends or relations to tear and cut off their hair to throw it on the dead body, or sometimes into the funeral pile, with a design to render the ghost of the deceased person propitious, as well as to shew their grief for the loss of him: we find Electra performing this ceremony in honour of Orestes whom she supposed dead.

Whoe'er he be, unbury'd may he lye,
 From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
 Ey'n as this hair which here I cut before thee;
 O! guard it well, my child, and you my friends,
 Behave like men, assist, protect him now;
 Till I return, and, spite of all our foes,
 Perform the rites, and raise a tomb to Ajax.

Exit.

S C E N E VIII.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the happy hour appear,
 That comes to calm our ev'ry fear,
 From endless toil to bring us sweet repose,
 To bid our weary wandrings cease,
 To fold us in the arms of peace,
 And put the wish'd-for period to our woes?
 For since the day when first to Troy we came,
 Nought have we known but grief, reproach, and shame.

ANTI-

Scene VIII. Menelaus goes out with an intention, we must suppose, to bring back with him a proper force to secure the execution of his orders which Teucer had treated with contempt; Teucer retires to find out a proper place for the interment of Ajax, and leaves Tecmessa and Eurysaces weeping over the body: the Chorus sings a pathetic dirge, lamenting the miseries of war, and their own unhappy condition.

A N T I S R O P H E I.

O! that the man, who erst inspir'd
 With horrid rage, our Grecians fir'd
 To slaughterous deeds, and taught them first to fight,
 E'er he had learn'd the dreadful trade,
 Himself had mingled with the dead,
 Or scatter'd wide in air, or sunk in endless night!
 For O! from war unnumber'd evils flow,
 The inexhausted source of ev'ry human woe.

S T R O P H E II.

By war disturb'd the genial board
 No longer will its sweets afford;
 Their fragrant odours round my head
 The verdant wreaths no longer spread;
 Nor music's charms my soul delight,
 Nor love with rapture crown the night;
 No love alas! for me, but grief and care;
 For when I think of Troy I still despair,
 And wet with many a tear my wild dishevell'd hair.

A N T I S R O P H E II.

Nor nightly fear nor hostile dart
 Whilst Ajax liv'd, appall'd my heart,
 But all our pleasures now are o'er,
 The valiant Ajax is no more:

O cou'd I climb the woody steep
That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat!
Thence shou'd my eye the lovely prospect greet,
And smile on sacred Athens rising at my feet.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

TEUCER, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

THIS way I bent my hasty steps to meet
The Grecian chief, who hither comes prepar'd
To vent his keen reproaches.

AGAMEMNON.

I am told
That thou, ev'n thou, the son of a vile slave,
Hast dar'd to utter foulest calumny
Against thy prince, and pass'd unpunish'd for it;
Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride
And high demeanor, had thy mother sprung
From noble blood? barbarian as thou art,
How could'st thou praise a wretch who like thyself
Was nothing? we, it seems, for thou hast sworn it,
Are not the masters or of Greece or thee;

Ajax

Ajax alone, thou say'st, was leader here.
Shall we be thus insulted by our slaves?
Who is this boaster? and what mighty deed
Hath he perform'd which I cou'd not have done?
Is there no Hero in the Grecian host
But Ajax? Vain indeed were our resolves
In the warm contest for Achilles' arms,
If Teucer yet shall question the decree,
Against the gen'ral voice; resisting still,
And still reproachful, with delusive arts
Tho' conquer'd, yet opposing: wholesome laws
Will nought avail, if those whom justice deems
Superior, to the vanquish'd must resign,
And first in virtue be the last in fame;
It must not be; not always the huge size
Of weighty limbs ensures the victory;
They who excel in wisdom are alone
Invincible: thou seest the brawny ox
How the small whip will drive him thro' the field;
What if the med'cine be apply'd to thee
For thy proud boasting, and licentious tongue!
T'will be thy portion soon, unless thou learn'st
More wisdom; henceforth, mindful what thou art,
Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead

Thy

Thy cause; for know, the language which thou talk'st
Is barb'rous, and I understand thee not.

C H O R U S.

I can but wish that wisdom may attend
To guide you both.

T E U C E R.

Alas! how very soon

Are all the merits of the dead forgotten!

O! Ajax, is the memory of thee

Already lost, ev'n by the man for whom

Thy life so oft was ventur'd in the field!

But now 'tis past, and buried in oblivion:

Thou wordy fland'rer! can'st thou not remember

When baffled and unequal to the foe

Close pent within the walls our forces lay,

Can'st thou not call to mind who came alone

To your deliv'rance, when devouring flames

Tow'r'd o'er our ships, when Hector leap'd the fofs

And rush'd amongst us, then who fought for Greece?

Who drove him back but Ajax, who, thou say'st,

Cou'd never fight? did he not fight for you?

He met the noble Hector hand to hand,

Unbidden dared the fortune of the field;

He scorn'd the coward's art to fix his lot

In the moist earth; forth from the crested helmet
It sprang the first: such were the deeds of Ajax,
And I was witness of them; I, the slave,
For so thou call'st me, sprung from a barbarian:
How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth!
Who was thy grandfire? can'st thou not remember
That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops, tell me
Who was thy father, Atreus, was he not?
That worst of men, who at a brother's table
Serv'd up his children, horrible repast!
Thy mother too a Cretan, and a slave;
A vile adultress, whom thy father caught
And head-long cast into the sea: shalt thou
Talk then to me of birth, to me, the son
Of valiant Telamon, renown'd in war,
And wedded to a queen, the royal race
Of great Laomedon, and fairest gift
Of fam'd Alcides? thus of noble blood
From either parent sprung, shall I disgrace
The man whom thou inhuman wou'dst still keep
Unbury'd here? dost thou not blush to think on't?
But, mark me well; if thou dost cast him forth,
Not he alone inglorious on the plain
Shall lye, together we will perish all:

To dye with glory in a brother's cause
 Is better far than fighting for the wife
 Of Agamemnon, or of Menelaus:
 For thy own sake, and not for mine, remember
 If thou provoke me, thou'lt be sorry for it,
 And wish'd thou'dst rather fear'd than anger'd Teucer.

S C E N E II.

U L Y S S E S, A G A M E M N O N, M E N E L A U S,
 T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Ulysses, if thou mean'st not to inflame,
 But to compose this dreadful strife, thou com'st
 In happiest hour.

U L Y S S E S.

Far off I heard the voice
 Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corse;
 Whence rose the clamour, friends?

M E N E L A U S.

With bitt'rest words
 This Teucer here, Ulysses, has revil'd me.

U L Y S S E S.

What words? for if he heard the same from thee,
 I blame him not.

A G A M E M N O N.

He did provoke me to it.

U L Y S S E S.

What inj'ry hath he done thee?

A G A M E M N O N.

He declares

The body shall have sepulture, himself

Perforce will bury Ajax, spite of me,

And of my pow'r.

U L Y S S E S.

Shall I be free, and speak

The truth to thee without reproach or blame?

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou mayst; for well thou know'st I hold Ulysses

Of all the Greeks my best and dearest friend.

U L Y S S E S.

Then hear me, by the gods I must intreat thee;

Do not, remorseless and inhuman, cast

The body forth unbury'd, nor permit

Authority to trample thus on justice.

E'er since our contest for Achilles' arms,

Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I scorn

To use him basely; ev'n Ulysses owns

Of all the Grecian chiefs who came to Troy

(Except

(Except Achilles) Ajax was the bravest.
Do not deny him then the honours due
To worth so great; for know, it were a crime
Not against him alone but 'gainst the gods,
A violation of the laws divine.
To hurt the brave and virtuous after death,
Ev'n tho' he liv'd thy foe, is infamous.

A G A M E M N O N.

Plead'st thou for Ajax?

U L Y S S E S.

Yes; I was his foe
Whilst justice wou'd permit me; but he's dead;
Therefore thou shoud'st not triumph, nor rejoice
With mirth unseemly o'er a vanquish'd man.

A G A M E M N O N.

'Tis not so easy for a king to act
By honour's strictest rules.

U L Y S S E S.

'Tis always so,
To hearken to the counsels of a friend,
When he advises well.

A G A M E M N O N.

But know, the good
And virtuous still submit to those who rule.

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

No more: when thou art vanquish'd by thy friends,
Thou art thyself the conqu'ror.

A G A M E M N O N.

Still remember
For whom thou plead'st, Ulysses.

U L Y S S E S.

For a foe,
But for a brave one.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou thus revere
Ev'n after death thy enemy?

U L Y S S E S.

I do:
Virtue is dearer to me than revenge.

A G A M E M N O N.

Such men are most unstable in their ways.

U L Y S S E S.

Our dearest friend may one day be our foe.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou desire such friends?

U L Y S S E S.

I cannot love
Or praise th' unfeeling heart.

A G A-

A J A X.

87

A G A M E M N O N.

This day shall Greece
Mark us for cowards.

U L Y S S E S.

Greece will call us just.

A G A M E M N O N.

Woud'st thou persuade me then to grant him burial?

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd, and for that purpose came I hither.

A G A M E M N O N.

How ev'ry man consults his own advantage,
And acts but for himself!

U L Y S S E S.

And who is he
Whom I shou'd wish to serve before Ulysses?

A G A M E M N O N.

'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine.

U L Y S S E S.

The deed will win thee praise, and ev'ry tongue
Shall call thee good.

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou know'st I'd not refuse
Ulysses more, much more than this; but Ajax
Or bury'd or unbury'd is the same,

And

And must be hateful still to Agamemnon;
But do as it beseems thee best.

C H O R U S.

Ulysses,
The man who says thou art not wise and good
Is senseless and unjust.

U L Y S S E S.

I tell thee, Teucer,
Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax
As once I was his foe: ev'n now I mean
To join with thee, a fellow-labourer.
In all the pious offices of love,
Nor wou'd omit, what ev'ry man shou'd pay
The honours due to such exalted virtue!

T E U C E R.

O! best of men, thou hast my thanks and praise,
And well deserv'st them, for thou hast transcended
My utmost hopes. I little thought the worst
Of all his foes among the Grecian host
Wou'd thus, alone defend, alone protect
The dead from insult, when these thund'ring leaders
United came, to cast his body forth
With infamy; but may the god who rules
O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful furies,

Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding sisters,
 With all-deciding justice soon repay
 The haughty tyrants: for thy offer'd aid,
 Son of Laertes, in the fun'ral rites,
 Perhaps it might offend the honour'd shade
 Of our dead friend, it cannot be accepted;
 For all beside we thank thee: if thou wilt
 To send assistance from the Grecian camp,
 'Twill be receiv'd; the rest shall be my care.
 Thou hast perform'd the duty of a friend,
 And we acknowledge it.

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd have lent
 My willing aid, but since it must not be,
 I shall submit; farewell.

[Exit Ulysses.]

S C E N E III.

A G A M E M N O N, M E N E L A U S, T E U C E R,
 E U R Y S A C E S, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Thus far is right;
 The time already past doth chide our sloth:
 My friends, be vigilant; let some prepare
 The hollow fofs, some o'er the sacred flame
 Place the rich tripod for the fun'ral bath;

N

Forth

Forth from the camp a chosen band must bear

His glitt'ring arms, and trophies of the war.

Do thou, my child, if thou hast strength, uplift

[to Euryfaces.

Thy father's body ; see, the veins, yet warm,

Spout forth with blood ; haste, help, assist me, all

Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me

Your last sad duties to the noble Ajax ;

For never was on earth a better man.

C H O R U S.

Whate'er of good or ill weak mortals know,

Must from their best of guides, experience, flow ;

Seek then no farther ; for to man is giv'n

The present state, the future left to heav'n.

Whate'er of good or ill &c. The sentiment in the original is, if I am not mistaken, exactly agreeable to my interpretation, though the Greek carries with it some degree of obscurity ; it seems design'd by Sophocles as a kind of moral to the drama ; I have therefore taken the liberty more fully to express, and explain it in the translation. For a complete defence and illustration of this play in all its parts, I refer my readers to Hedelin's critique on Ajax, subjoin'd to his pratique du theatre, or, whole art of the stage.

F I N I S.



E L E C T R A.



Dramatis Personæ.

ELECTRA, daughter of AGAMEMNON and CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ORESTES, brother of ELECTRA.

PYLADES, friend of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, wife to ÆGISTHUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, sister of ELECTRA.

ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycenæ.

C H O R U S,

Composed of the principal LADIES of MYCENÆ.

SCENE, MYCENÆ, before the palace of ÆGISTHUS.

E L E C T R A.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

O R E S T E S, P Y L A D E S,

G O V E R N O R of O R E S T E S.

G O V E R N O R.

O Son of great Atrides, he who led
Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls,
At length behold what thy desiring eyes
So long have fought, behold thy native foil,
Thy much-lov'd Argos, and the hallow'd grove

O

Of

The scene lies just before the gates of the palace of Ægisthus; on the back part of it is represented a view of the two cities of Argos and Mycenæ, the temple of Juno, and the grove of Io, which must altogether have made a noble and magnificent appearance, as the Greeks spared no expence in the decorations of their theatre. The place of action, the persons, with the whole view and subject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the first scene, with that accuracy, plainness and simplicity, for which Sophocles is so eminently distinguish'd.

The hallow'd grove of Io. Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transform'd into a heifer by Jupiter to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who discover'd and placed her under the guardianship of Argus. She afterwards sent a gad-fly to sting her into madness. The story is told in the first book of Ovid's Metamorph.

Of Io, frantic maid: on this fide lies
 The Lycian forum, on the left the fane
 Of Juno far renown'd: behold! we come
 To rich Mycenæ, and the slaught'rous house
 Of Pelops' hapless race, from whose sad walls
 Long since I bore thee, at thy sisters hand
 Gladly receiv'd, and with paternal care
 To this blest day have foster'd up thy youth,
 Till riper years shou'd give thee to return.
 And pay with dire revenge thy father's murder.
 Now, my Orestes, and thou dear companion
 Of all our suff'rings, much-lov'd Pylades.
 Let deepest counsel sway our just resolves:
 For lo! resplendent Phœbus with his light
 Calls up the chearful birds to early song.

And

The Lycian forum. A place sacred to Apollo, *Λυκιστὸν ἢ Λυκοκτονὸν* the wolf-slayer, so call'd from his killing wolves when under the disguise of a shepherd to Admetus.

The fane of Juno. Between Argos and Mycenæ, which are often mistaken by the tragic poets for the same city, was placed the magnificent temple of Juno. Before the time of Agamemnon they had each a distinct sovereign: he first united and ruled over them both.

The slaught'rous house of Pelops. A family which furnish'd ample matter for the tragic poets. The stories, first alluded to, of Tantalus, Pelops, Thyestes, Agamemnon, &c. are too well known to need any illustration.

And gloomy night hath lost her starry train:
 Come then, my friends, and e'er th' awaken'd city
 Pours forth her busy throngs, this instant here
 Let us consult; believe me, 'tis no time
 For dull delay; tis the decisive hour,
 And this the very crisis of our fate.

O R E S T E S.

What proofs thou giv'st me of the noblest nature
 And true benevolence, thou good old man!
 Of servants sure the faithfulest and best
 That ever bore the name: the gen'rous steed,
 Tho' worn with years, thus keeps his wonted courage;
 And warns his master of approaching danger;
 Like him thou stirr'st me up to noble deeds,
 And follow'st me undaunted: but attend
 To what I have resolv'd, and if I err,
 Let thy superior judgment set me right.

When to the delphic oracle I flew,
 Eager to know how on my father's foes
 I best might satiate my revenge, the god
 Enjoin'd me not by force or open arms
 To rush upon them, but with guileful arts
 And silent well-conducted fraud betray them.
 Such was his will; thou therefore, soon as time

Shall lend thee opportunity, unknown
 And unsuspected (as thy absence hence
 For so long space and hoary age shall make thee)
 Must steal upon them, learn their secret counsels,
 As soon thou may'st, and quick inform us of them;
 Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus sent
 By one who is their friend and firm ally;
 Say, and confirm it with a solemn oath
 Orestes is no more, by a rude shock
 Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games;
 Be this thy tale; mean time (for thus the god
 His will divine express'd) my father's tomb
 With due libations and devoted hair
 Ourselves will crown; and thence returning bring,
 From the dark covert where thou know'st 'twas hid,
 The brazen urn; there, we shall tell the tyrant,

Thrice

From Phanoteus sent, &c. Phanoteus was a small midland town of Phocis, a city of Greece, famous for the Oracle of Delphos: according to Strabo it was formerly call'd Panope.

At the Pythian games, &c. The games here mention'd, and which are described in the second act, were not instituted till five hundred years after the death of Orestes; Sophocles therefore is found guilty by the critics of a flagrant anachronism in this place. Mr. Brumoy however endeavours to defend him by observing that though the latest Æra of their first celebration is dated at the 48th Olympiad, Apollo might nevertheless, immediately after the destruction of the Pytho, have himself instituted; something like the grand solemnity, which was many years afterwards heightened and improved by the public exhibition of these games under the influence of the civil power.

Thrice welcome news! Orestes' ashes lie.
What shou'd deter me from the pious fraud?
Since my feign'd death but gains me real fame,
And I shall wake to better life: the deed,
Which brings success and honour, must be good.
Oft times the wisest and the best of men
From death like this have rose with added greatness;
Ev'n so thy friend to his deluded foes
Shall soon return unlook'd for, and before them
Shine like a star with more distinguish'd lustre.
O! my lov'd country, and its guardian gods,
Receive Orestes, and with happy omen
Propitious smile, and thou, paternal seat,
For lo! by heav'n's command I come to purge thee
Of vile usurpers, and avenge thy wrongs;
Drive me not from thee an abandon'd exile
With infamy, but grant me to possess
My father's throne, and fix his injur'd race.
Thus far 'tis well: my faithful minister,

Thou

The pious fraud &c. The Greeks, who were remarkably superstitious, entertain'd a notion that to feign themselves dead had something in it both wicked and dangerous; they were apprehensive that death would not be thus mock'd, but would revenge the fraud by coming upon them in reality. Orestes endeavours to shake off these fears, and to vindicate himself by the example of others who had done the same, and pass'd unpunish'd.

Thou to thy office, we to ours with speed;
 So time and opportunity require,
 On whom the fate of mortals must depend.

E L E C T R A.

[from within.]

O misery!

G O V E R N O R.

Methought a mournful voice
 Spake from within.

O R E S T E S.

Perhaps the poor Electra,
 Shall we not stay and hearken to it?

G O V E R N O R.

No:

First be Apollo's great behests obey'd
 Before thy father's tomb; that pious deed
 Perform'd shall fire our souls with nobler warmth
 And crown our bold attempt with fair success.

[Exeunt.]

S C E N E

First be Apollo's, &c. The meeting of Electra and Orestes in this place would apparently have spoil'd the whole oeconomy of the drama; it is therefore artfully defer'd by the poet, at the same time that the reason alledged by the old man gives us the most favourable idea of the piety of the antients. A brother has an opportunity of seeing and conversing with a sister whom he loved, and from whom he had been separated twenty years, but he forgoes it, in order previously to perform a religious duty. Christians may read and profit by the example.

S C E N E II.

E L E C T R A.

O! sacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
 Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
 Her sighs, and groans, and witness'd to her woes,
 Which ever as each hateful morn appear'd
 I pour'd before you; what at eve retir'd
 I felt of anguish my sad couch alone
 Can tell, which water'd nightly with my tears
 Receiv'd me sorrowing; that best can tell
 What pangs I suffer'd for a hapless father,
 Whom not the god of war with ruthless hand
 Struck nobly fighting in a distant soil,
 But my fell mother, and the curs'd Ægisthus,
 The part'ner of her bed, remorseless slew;
 Untimely didst thou fall, lamented shade,
 And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate;
 Nor shall she cease to mourn thee, while these eyes
 View the fair heavens, or behold the sun;
 Never, O! never! like the nightingale

Whose

Like the nightingale, &c. Philomela the daughter of Pandion, and sister of Procne the wife of Tereus. The poet, both in this and the following scene, takes the nightingale for Procne, as it was Procne and not Philomela who served up her son Itys to Tereus in revenge for the injury done to her sister. Æschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes also suppose Procne to have been changed into a nightingale.

Whose plaintive song bewails her ravish'd brood ;
 Here will I still lament my father's wrongs,
 And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
 O! ye infernal deities, and thou
 Terrestrial Hermes, and thou, Nemesis,
 Replete with curses, and ye vengeful furies,
 Offspring of Gods, the ministers of wrath
 To vile adult'ers, who with pity view
 The slaughter'd innocent, behold this deed!
 O! come, assist, revenge my father's murther;
 Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Orestes;
 For lo I sink beneath oppressive woe,
 And can no longer bear the weight alone.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S, & E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

O! wretched daughter of an impious mother!
 Wilt thou for ever mourn, for ever thus
 With unavailing tears, and endless sorrow
 Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate,
 By a vile woman's wicked arts betray'd?
 Perish the hand (forgive the pious curse,
 Ye heav'nly pow'rs!) that gave the deadly blow!

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

My noble friends, and partners in affliction,
 Who thus, to sooth my sorrows, kindly try
 Each art which love and friendship can inspire;
 Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do,
 I know my tears are fruitless all and vain;
 But O! permit me to indulge my griefs,
 For I must weep.

C H O R U S.

Thy tears can ne'er recall him
 From the dark mansions of the common grave,
 No, nor thy pray'rs; they can but make thee wretched,
 And sink thee deeper in calamity;
 Why art thou then so fond of misery?

E L E C T R A.

Devoid of sense and feeling is the heart
 That can forget an injur'd parent's wrongs.
 I love the airy messenger of Jove,
 The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate,
 And ev'ry night repeats the tender tale;
 Thee too I reverence as a goddess, thee,

P

Unhappy

Messenger of Jove. Procne, called the messenger of Jove, from her usher-
 ing in the spring. See the note on Philomela.

Unhappy Niobe! for still thou weep'st,
And from the marble tears eternal flow.

C H O R U S.

But O! reflect, that not to thee alone
Misfortune comes, that comes to all: behold
Iphianassa, and Chrysothemis,
And him who hides his grief, illustrious youth,
Thy lov'd Orestes, these have suffer'd too.

E L E C T R A.

Orestes! yes, Mycenæ shall receive
In happy hour her great avenger; Jove
With smiles auspicious shall conduct him to me;
For him alone I wait, for him, a wretch
Despis'd, of children and of nuptial rites
Hopeless I wander; he remembers not
What I have done for him, what suffer'd, still

With

Unhappy Niobe. Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes; feign'd by the poets to be turn'd into stone, after the death of her children. See Ovid's Met. Book VI.

Iphianassa and Chrysothemis. Homer (Il. Book IX.) mentions three daughters of Agamemnon, Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa. Euripides takes no notice of any but Iphigenia, (who was sacrificed) and Electra. Possibly the Laodice of Homer is the Electra of Sophocles. The poets took the liberty of changing circumstances of this nature, not essential to the subject, as they thought proper.

With airy promises he mocks my hopes,
And yet' he comes not to me.

C H O R U S.

But he will.

Despair not, daughter; Jove is yet in heav'n,
The god who sees, and knows, and governs all:
Patient to him submit, nor let thy rage
Too far transport thee, nor oblivion drown
The just remembrance of thy matchless woes;
Time is a kind indulgent deity,
And he shall give thee succour, he shall send
The god of Acheron, from Chrysa's shores
To bring Orestes, and avenge thy wrongs.

E L E C T R A.

O! but the while how much of life is gone!
And I a hopeless wretched orphan still,
Without a friend to guard, or to protect me;
Disgrac'd, dishonour'd, like a stranger clad
In base attire, and fed with homeliest fare.

C H O R U S.

Sad news indeed the hapless messenger
To Argos brought, that spoke the wish'd return

P 2

Of

From Chrysa's shores. Chrysa, or Chryssa was a town of Phocis by the river side, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king; this is the place where Orestes was privately educated, and accounts for the so much celebrated friendship of the two princes.

Of thy lov'd father to his native foil;
 Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
 Or by a mortal or immortal hand;
 The work of fraud and lust, a horrid deed!
 Whoe'er perform'd it.

E L E C T R A.

O! detested feast!
 O! day, the bitt'rest ture that ever rose!
 With him I perish'd then; but may the gods
 Repay the murth'ers; never may they hear
 The voice of joy, or taste of comfort more.

C H O R U S.

Cease thy complaints, already hast thou suffer'd
 For thy loud discontents, and threat'ned vengeance.
 'Tis folly to contend with pow'r superior.

E L E C T R A.

The work of fraud and lust. Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra are said to have watch'd Agamemnon as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a shirt without any opening at the neck, entangled in this they murder'd him; thus was the scheme laid by fraud and treachery and executed by lust.

Whoe'er perform'd it. The Chorus seems fearful of attributing that crime to Clytæmnestra and Ægisthus, which they knew them guilty of, and to doubt whether they were at liberty to imprecate the divine vengeance on them for it. Dacier attributes this to the author's own idea of government, as requiring the implicit submission of subjects to their king, whether he was their lawful sovereign or an usurper. Perhaps a better reason for this diffidence may be assign'd from the natural modesty of the sex, and the impiety of cursing those who had at least done no injury to them.

E L E C T R A.

Folly indeed, and madness! but my griefs
 Will force their way, and whilst Electra breathes
 She must lament; for who will bring me comfort,
 Or sooth my sorrows? let me, let me go,
 And weep for ever.

C H O R U S.

'Tis my love intreats;
 Trust me, I feel a mother's fondness for thee,
 And fain wou'd save thee from redoubled woes.

E L E C T R A.

And wou'st thou have me then neglect the dead?
 Forget my father? can there be such guilt?
 When I do so may infamy pursue me!
 And if I wed, may all the joys of love
 Be far remov'd! if vengeance doth not fall
 On crimes like these, for ever farewell justice,
 Shame, honour, truth and piety, farewell!

C H O R U S.

I feel a mother's fondness, &c. The Chorus is composed of the principal ladies of Mycenæ; the air of authority with which they address Electra, their calling her daughter, with other circumstances, make it most probable that, as Dacier has remark'd, they were not virgins, but matrons of rank and quality in the city.

C H O R U S.

Pardon me, daughter; if my warmth offend,
Glad I submit; we'll follow, and obey thee.

E L E C T R A.

I am myself to blame, and blush to think
How much unfit I seem to bear the weight
Impos'd upon me; but indeed 'tis great:
Forgive me, friends, a ~~woman~~ born as I am,
Must she not grieve to see each added minute
Fraught with new mis'ries? thus to be a slave
Ev'n in my father's house, and from those hands
Which shed his blood to ask the means of life!
Think what my soul must suffer to behold
The curs'd Ægisthus seated on the throne
Of Agamemnon, in the very robes
Which once were his; to see the tyrant pour
Libations forth ev'n on the fatal spot,
Where the sad deed was done; but worst of all
To see the murderer usurp his bed,
Embrace my mother, (by that honour'd name
If I may call a guilty wretch like her)
Who pleas'd returns his love, and of her crimes
Unconscious smiles, nor fears th' avenging furies,
But ever as the bloody day returns

Which

Which gave the royal victim to her wiles,
 Annual the dance and choral song proclaim
 A solemn feast, nor impious sacrifice
 Forgets she then to her protecting gods.
 Shock'd at the cruel banquet I retire,
 And in some corner hide my griefs, deny'd
 Ev'n the sad comfort to indulge my sorrows;
 For Clytæmnestra in opprobrious terms
 Reviles me oft, "To thee alone, she cries,
 "Is Agamemnon lost, detested maid!
 "Think'st thou Electra only weeps his fate?
 "Perdition on thee! may th' infernal gods
 "Refuse thee succour, and protract thy pains!"
 Thus rails she bitter, and if chance she hear
 Orestes is approaching, stung with rage
 Wild she exclaims, "Thou art th' accursed cause,
 "This is thy deed, who stole Orestes from me,
 "And hid him from my rage; but be assur'd
 "E'er long my vengeance shall o'ertake thee for it!"

These.

Proclaim a solemn feast. Nothing cou'd add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytæmnestra, not content with murdering her husband, institutes a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and calls it, with cruel raillery, the supper of Agamemnon. Dinius, in his history of Argos, informs us it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

These threats her noble lord still urges on;
 That vile adult'rer, that abandon'd coward,
 Whose fearful soul call'd in a woman's aid
 To execute his bloody purposes.
 Mean-time Electra fights for her Orestes,
 Her wish'd avenger; his unkind delay
 Destroys my hopes; alas! my gentle friends,
 Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind?
 To suffer ills like mine, and not to err
 From wild distraction, wou'd be strange indeed.

C H O R U S.

But say, Electra, is the tyrant near?
 Or may we speak our thoughts unblam'd?

E L E C T R A.

Thou may'st;
 I had not else beyond the palace dared
 To wander hither.

C H O R U S.

I wou'd fain have ask'd thee——

E L E C T R A.

Ask what thou wilt, Ægisthus is far off.

C H O R U S.

Touching thy brother then, inform me quick
 If aught thou know'st that merits firm belief.

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

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E L E C T R A.

He promises, but comes not.

C H O R U S.

Things of moment
Require deliberation and delay.

E L E C T R A.

O! but did I delay to save Orestes?

C H O R U S.

He boasts a noble nature, and will ne'er
Forget his friends: be confident.

E L E C T R A.

I am,

Were I not so I had not liv'd till now.

C H O R U S.

But soft; behold the fair Chrysothemis
Advance this way, and in her hand she bears
Sepulchral offerings to the shades below.

Q

S C E N E

Sepulchral offerings. The libations, or sepulchral offerings here mention'd, were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; these were design'd to render the ghost kind and propitious, and were therefore call'd *χορὴ ἡδυστηγία* or *ἑδακτηγία*; these were pour'd upon the ground or grave-stone, and together with a certain form of words offer'd to the deceased.

S C E N E IV.

CHRYSOthemis, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOthemis.

Still, my Electra, pouring forth thy griefs?
 Art thou not yet by sad experience taught
 How little they avail? I too must feel
 And cou'd repent, as, were thy sister's pow'r
 But equal to her will, our foes shou'd know.
 Mean-time with lower'd sails to bear the storm
 Befits us best, nor, helpless as we are,
 With idle hopes to meditate revenge;
 Yield then with me, and tho' impartial justice
 Plead on thy side, remember, if we prize
 Or life or liberty, we must obey.

E L E C T R A.

It ill becomes great Agamemnon's daughter
 Thus to forget her noble father's worth,
 And take a base unworthy mother's part;
 For well I see from whom thy counsels flow;
 Nought from thyself thou say'st but all from her:
 Either thy reason's lost or if thou hast it,
 Thou hast forgot thy friends who shou'd be dear
 And precious to thee: of thy boasted hate
 Against our foes, and what thou vaunt'st to do,

If

If thou had'st pow'r, I reckon not; whilst with me
Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but still
Dissuad'st me from it; is't not cowardly
To leave me thus? tell, I beg thee, tell me
What mighty gain awaits my tame submission,
Shou'd I suppress my griefs: I can but live,
That I do now, a wretched life indeed!

But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy
Whilst I can torture them, and to the dead
Pay grateful honours; (if to them such care
Aught grateful can bestow) thy hate, I fear me
Is but in word: thou dost befriend the murth'ers:
For me, not all the wealth they cou'd bestow,
Not all the gifts which they have pour'd on thee,
Shou'd bind me to 'em: take thy costly banquets,
And let thy days with ease and pleasure flow;
Give me but food, and I am satisfy'd.

I wish not for thy honours, nor woud'st thou,
If thou wer't wise, receive 'em at their hands.
Thou might'st be daughter to the best of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name,
And henceforth all shall mark thee as a wretch
Who hath betray'd her father and her friends,

C H O R U S.

I do intreat you, let not anger come
 Between you thus; you both have reason'd well,
 And much of mutual benefit may flow,
 If each to other lend a patient ear.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Custom, my noble friends, hath made reproach
 Familiar to me, and so well I know
 Her haughty mind, I had been silent still
 But that I saw the danger imminent,
 And came to warn her of the fatal stroke,
 Which soon must end her, and her griefs together.

E L E C T R A.

Tell me this mighty danger, if aught more
 It threaten than Electra long hath borne,
 I yield me to thy counsels.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Hear me then:

Know, thou art doom'd, unless thou dost refrain
 Thy clam'rous griefs, far from the light of day,
 And this thy native soil, within a cell
 Dismal and dark to spend the poor remains
 Of thy sad life, and there lament thy fate.

ELECTRA.

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ELECTRA.

Is it decreed? must it in truth be so?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Soon as Ægisthus shall return, it must.

ELECTRA.

Quick let him come; I long to see him here.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Alas! what dreadful imprecations these!

ELECTRA.

Wou'd he were present, if for this he comes!

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

What! to destroy thee! is thy mind disturb'd?

ELECTRA.

That I might fly for ever from thy sight.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Wilt thou not think how to preserve thy life?

ELECTRA.

Mine is a blessed life indeed to think of.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

It might be blest, if thou wou'dst have it so.

ELECTRA.

Teach me not basely to betray my friends.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I do not; all I ask thee is to yield

To pow'rs superior.

ELEC-

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

Fawn on them thyself;
Thou dost not know Electra.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Sure it better
Deserves the name of wisdom to avoid
Than hasten thy destruction.

E L E C T R A.

No, to dye
Were pleasure, cou'd I but avenge my father.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis mean to think so.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wilt thou not consent?

E L E C T R A.

Never O! never be my soul so weak.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Then to my errand; fare thee well.

E L E C T R A.

To whom,
Chrysothemis, and whither dost thou bear
Those sacred off'rings?

C H R Y.

E L E C T R A.

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C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

To our father's tomb

From Clytæmnestra.

E L E C T R A.

To the man she hated?

The man, my sister——

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Whom she kill'd, I know

Thou wou'dst have said.

E L E C T R A.

Why, what shou'd move her to it?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If I mistake not, horrors late impress'd

From a sad vision.

E L E C T R A.

O! my country's gods,

Succour me now!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

What hopes dost thou conceive

From this?

E L E C T R A.

The dream: and I will tell thee all.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I know but little of it.

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

Tell me that :

Oft' times to words, how few foe'er they be,
Is giv'n the pow'r to save or to destroy.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Once more to light return'd (so fame reports)
Before her our lov'd father did appear,
The royal sceptre wielded in his hand
Which now Ægisthus bears, whence seem'd to spring
A green and leafy branch, whose wide extent
O'er all Mycenæ spread its verdant shade.
This did I learn, and this alone, from one
Who listen'd long attentive while she told
Her vision to the sun; hence all her fears,
And hence my destin'd journey.

E L E C-

Once more to light, &c. In the Coephori of Æschylus, Clytæmnestra dreams that she was brought to bed of a dragon to whom she gives suck, and who draws out all her blood. Sophocles, who borrow'd this incident from his predecessor, has alter'd and improved it; the circumstances here related are more interesting, and the interpretation more obvious; besides that, it is render'd instrumental to the plan of the drama, by sending Chrysothemis to her father's tomb, where she finds the offerings of Orestes, which prepares the discovery of his unexpected arrival.

Told her vision to the Sun. It was customary among the antients, when they had been terrify'd by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the sun, who, they imagin'd, as he had power to dispel the darkness, could also turn aside all the evils which the preceding night had threat'ned them with; Apollo was therefore stiled *ἡλιόπρασος* or the averter of evil, and had images erected to him under that title.

E L E C T R A.

By the gods

Let me conjure thee, hear me; if thou dost not,
Too late shalt thou repent, when for thy guilt
Evil o'ertake thee; O! Chrysothemis!

Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb

Bear thou those off'rings; 'twere a horrid deed,

From such a woman; give 'em to the winds,

Let them be hid, deep bury'd in the sands,

And not the smallest grain escape to reach

That hallow'd place; let 'em remain for her,

Safe in the earth till she shall meet 'em there.

None but this shameless, this abandon'd woman

Wou'd e'er with impious off'rings thus adorn

The tomb of him she murther'd: by the dead

Think'st thou such gifts can be with joy receiv'd?

Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corse

Sever'd his lifeless limbs, and on the head

R

Of

Sever'd his lifeless limbs. The word *εμαχαλιθην* in the original, and which is made use of by Æschylus also, is supposed by the commentators to allude to a superstitious custom of achrotiresing, or cutting off the external parts of the person slain, and fixing them under their arm-pits; a kind of charm, which the murtherer imagined would prevent him from sending the furies to revenge his murther.

Of the poor victim wip'd her bloody sword :
 Madnefs to think that off'rings and ablutions
 Cou'd purge fuch crimes, or wash her ftains away ;
 Never, O ! never : but of this no more.
 Instant, my fifter, thy devoted hair
 With thefe difhevell'd locks, and this my zone,
 Plain as it is and unadorn'd, fhalt thou
 Bear to our father ; wretched off'rings thefe !
 But O ! 'tis all Electra now can give.
 Bear them, and fuppliant on thy knees implore him
 To fmile propitious, and affift his children ;
 Pray for Oreftes too, that foon with pow'r
 He may return, and trample on our foes ;
 So fhall a fairer tribute one day grace
 His honour'd tomb than now we can beftow.
 Truft me, my fifter, we are ftill his care,
 I know, we are ; from him the vifion came,
 The horrid dream that fhook her guilty foul :
 Now then, I beg thee, be a friend to me ;
 Be to thyfelf a friend ; a friend to him,
 Of all mankind the deareft, our dead father.

C H O R U S.

Wip'd her bloody fword. The murderer wiped the instrument of the murder in the hair of the deceased, and then wash'd it, perfuaded that this would wipe away the guilt alfo.

C H O R U S.

Well doth the pious virgin speak, and thou
Must yield to her requests.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

And so I will.

Where reason dictates, strife shou'd never come;
But quick, dispatch, fulfill her just commands,
Yet, O! my friends, remember, our attempt
Is full of danger, and let nought escape
That may betray me to my cruel mother;
For, if it reach her ear, this daring act,
I fear me much, shall one day cost us dear.

[Exit Chrysothemis.]

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S, E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Or my prophetic mind is now no more,
Attentive as of old to wisdom's lore,

R 2

Or

Scene V. This is the first song or intermede of the Chorus, who, after hearing the dream related by Chrysothemis, draw from it fair omens of Electra's success, and vengeance on the murderers of Agamemnon: it is remarkable that Electra remains on the stage all the time; a plain proof among many others that (as it is observed in the dissertation) the division of these tragedies into acts is merely arbitrary, and of late invention, as it would be absurd for the principal character to appear thus between the acts.

Or justice comes, with speedy vengeance fraught ;
 Behold ! the goddess arm'd with pow'r appears,
 It must be so, by Clytæmnestra's fears,
 And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought :
 Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
 Shall hither come his wrongs to vindicate ;
 And, in his gore imbrued,
 The fatal axe with him shall rise,
 Shall ask another sacrifice,
 And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Lo ! with unnumber'd hands, and countless feet
 The fury comes her destin'd prey to meet,
 Deep in the covert hid she glides unseen,
 Hangs o'er the trembling murth'rer's head,
 Or steals to the adult'rous bed,
 An awful witness of the guilty scene ;
 Doubtless the dream with all its terrors meant
 For crimes like these some dreadful punishment,
 If mortals aught from nightly visions know,
 If truth from great Apollo's shrine
 Appears in oracles divine,
 Prefaging bliss to come, or threat'ning future woe.

E P O D E.

O! Pelops, to thy country and to thee,
The fatal course brought woe and misery;
For since the time when from his chariot thrown,
For thee the guilty wreath to gain,
The hapless Myrtilus was slain,
Nought has thy wretched race but grief and sorrow known.

End of A C T I.

The hapless Myrtilus. To understand this passage it is necessary to be acquainted with the following story.

Oenomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refused to give in marriage, because the oracle declared that a son-in-law would be fatal to him; he promised however to bestow his daughter on any man who should conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all, who were vanquish'd by him, should be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and perish'd in the attempt; the horses of Oenomaus were swift as the wind, and consequently invincible; these examples however did not deter Pelops, who enter'd the lists against Oenomaus, and bribed his charioteer Myrtilus with a promise of half his kingdom if he succeeded; Myrtilus listen'd to his offers, and purposely forgot to put the pins into the wheels of his master's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the course. Pelops espous'd Hippodamia, but afterwards, instead of performing his promise to Myrtilus, chose rather to get rid of this instrument of treachery by throwing him into the sea. Mercury, who it seems was the father of Myrtilus, revenged the murder of his son by entailing curses on Pelops and all his posterity. It appears by this, that the Heathens believed that God punish'd the crimes of fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.

A C T II.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS absent, who alone cou'd curb
 Thy haughty spirit, and licentious tongue ;
 At large, it seems, thou rov'st, and unrestrain'd,
 No deference paid to my authority,
 But on thy mother ever pouring forth
 Bitter invectives, while the list'ning croud
 Are taught to hold me proud, and fierce of soul,
 A lawless tyrant stand'ring thee and thine :
 I am no stand'rer, I abhor the name,
 But oft revil'd, of force I must reply,
 And send thy foul reproaches back upon thee.
 Thou say'st I slew thy father ; that alone
 Is left to plead for all thy insolence.
 I do confess the deed, and glory in it ;
 I slew thy father ; yet not I alone,
 I had the hand of justice to assist me,
 And shou'd have had Electra's : well thou know'st
 That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears

Incessant flow, that father slew his child ;
 He, he alone of all the Grecian host
 Gave up his daughter, horrid sacrifice !
 To the offended gods : he never felt
 A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them ;
 Or if he did, why slay the innocent ?
 For Greece thou tell'st me : Greece cou'd never claim
 A right to what was mine ; or did she fall
 For Menelaus ? he had children too,
 Why might not they have dy'd ? their parent's guilt,
 Source of the war, more justly had deserv'd it ;
 Or think'st thou death with keener appetite
 Cou'd feast on mine, and Helen's not afford
 As sweet a banquet ? why was all the love,
 To me and to my child so justly due,
 With lavish hand bestow'd on Menelaus ?
 Was he not then a base inhuman father ?
 He was : and so, cou'd Iphigenia speak,

Thy

He had children too. According to Homer (See *Odyss.* b. 4.) Menelaus had only one child, Hermione. Hesiod gives him two, Hermione and Nicostratus : the latter tradition was more agreeable to Sophocles ; because, if Menelaus had but one child, the loss would have been greater to him than to Agamemnon, who had many ; this we see, would destroy the force of Clytæmnestra's argument, which is strengthen'd by the other supposition.

Cou'd Iphigenia speak. Clytæmnestra endeavours to palliate her guilt by reproaching Agamemnon with the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Euripides strengthens this

Thy breathless sister, she too wou'd declare:
 Know then, I grieve not; shame or penitence
 I feel not for the deed; and if to thee
 It seem so heinous, weigh each circumstance,
 Remember what he did, and lay the blame
 On him who well deserv'd the fate he suffer'd.

E L E C T R A.

Thou hast no plea for bitterness like this;
 Thou can'st not say that I provok'd thee to it,
 I have been silent: had I leave to speak
 I cou'd defend an injur'd father's cause,
 And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A,

I do permit thee; and if modest thus
 Thou had'st address'd me always, thy free speech
 Had ne'er offended.

E L E C T R A.

Hast thou not confess'd
 That thou did'st slay my father? whether justice
 Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confess it;

But

this plea by the addition of another, which the ladies will allow to have been still more forcible, viz. that Agamemnon kept another woman, and even brought her into the same house with his wife. The fact is thus alluded to by Ovid,

Dum fuit Atrides una contentus, & illa
 Casta fuit; vitio est improba facta viri.

But justice never cou'd persuade thee, no;
 I'll tell thee who it was, it was Ægisthus,
 The wretch with whom thou liv'st; go ask the goddess,
 Th' immortal huntress, why the winds were stay'd
 So long at Aulis; but thou must not ask
 The chaste Diana; take it then from me;
 My father once, as for the chace prepar'd,
 Careless he wander'd thro' her sacred grove,
 Forth from it's covert rous'd a spotted hind,
 Of fairest form, with tow'ring antlers grac'd,
 Pursu'd and slew her; of the deity
 Something with pride elate he utter'd then
 Disdainful; quick resenting the affront,
 Latona's daughter stay'd the Grecian fleet,
 Nor wou'd forgive, till for her slaughter'd beast
 Th' offending father sacrific'd his child.
 Thus Iphigenia fell; and but for her,

S

Greece

Thou must not ask the chaste Diana. A murderer and adulteress, like Clytæmnestra, must not dare approach or speak to the goddess of chastity. Clytæmnestra feels the reproach, but at the same time, to persuade Electra that she was not affected by it, a few lines after we find her invoking that goddess, "by chaste Diana, soon as Ægisthus comes, &c."

My father once &c. There is certainly an impropriety (though not, as I remember, observed by any of the commentators) in relating this story to Clytæmnestra, who, we must suppose, could be no stranger to it. Sophocles, however, thought it might be necessary to acquaint the audience with this circumstance, and therefore took this method to inform them of it.

Greece ne'er had seen or Ilion's lofty tow'rs,
Or her own native foil; the father strove
In vain to save, and not for Menelaus
He gave her up at last, but for his country.
Suppose a brother's fondness had prevail'd,
And she was giv'n for him, would that excuse
Thy horrid deed? what law requir'd it of thee?
That law alone by which thyself must fall;
If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fix'd.
Plead not so poorly then, but tell me why
Thou liv'st adult'rous thus with a vile ruffian,
Thy base assistant? why are those, who sprung
From thy first nuptials, cast unkindly forth
For his new race? was this thy piety?
Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death?
In pure revenge to wed her deadliest foe
Was noble, was it not? but I forget,
You are my mother, so it seems you say,
And I must hold my peace; but I deny it;
I say you are my mistress, not my mother;
A cruel mistress that afflicts my soul,
And makes this weary life a burthen to me.
Orestes too, the hapless fugitive,
Who once escap'd thy fatal hand, now drags

A loathsome being; him, thou say'st, I look'd for
To join in my revenge, and so I did;
I wou'd have been reveng'd, I tell thee so:
Say, I am base, malicious, impudent,
Abusive, what thou wilt; for if I am,
It speaks my birth, and I resemble thee.

C H O R U S.

Repentment deep hath fir'd the virgin's breast;
Whether with truth and justice on her side
She speak, I know not.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Can they plead for her?
What care, what love, or tenderness is due
To an abandon'd child, who shameless thus
Reviles a parent? is there, after this,
A crime in nature she wou'd blush to act?

E L E C T R A.

I am not base, nor shameless, as thou call'st me,
For know, even now I blush for what is past,
Indecent warmth, and words that ill became
My tender years, and virgin modesty;
But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice urg'd me to it;
From bad examples, bad alone we learn,
I only err'd because I follow'd thee.

E L E C T R A.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Impudent wretch ! and am I then the cause
Of all thy clam'rous insolence ?

E L E C T R A.

Thou art :

Foul is thy speech, because thy deed was foul ;
For words from actions flow.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

By chaste Diana,

Soon as Ægifthus comes, thy boldness meets
Its just reward.

E L E C T R A.

Is this thy promis'd leave,
So lately granted, freely to unfold
What now incens'd thou dost refuse to hear ?

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Have I not heard thee, and in base return
With luckless omen dost thou now retard
My pious sacrifice ?

E L E C-

With luckless omen &c. The antients were of opinion, that if, during the time of sacrifice, they heard any thing melancholy, it was an ill omen ; in the beginning of those therefore that were public, silence was enjoin'd to all present ; hence the phrase of favete linguis.

E L E C T R A.

O! far from me

Be guilt like that; perform it, I beseech thee;
In holy silence shall these lips be clos'd,
And not a word escape to thwart thy purpose.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[speaking to one of her attendants.]

Hither do thou the sacred off'rings bring
Of various fruits compos'd, that to the god
Whose altars we adorn, my fervent pray'r
May rise accepted, and dispel my fears.
Hear then, Apollo, great protector, hear
My secret vows, for with no friendly ear
My voice is heard; her malice wou'd betray,
Shou'd I unveil my heart, each word I utter'd,
And scatter idle rumours thro' the croud.

[softly.]

Thus then accept my pray'rs, Lycean Phœbus!
If in the doubtful visions of the night

[aloud.]

Which

Hear my secret vows. Brumoy observes on this passage, that Clytæmnestra here retires towards a corner of the scene, near the altar, where she makes her prayer, and offers the sacrifice, whilst Electra remains upon the stage at a little distance from her; we must suppose her therefore, speaking part of this speech aloud, and part softly, so as not to be over-heard by Electra; she implores Apollo to mark rather the purport, than the words of her prayer; thus she utters in a low voice, till she comes to, Lycean Phœbus, &c. which she

Which broke my slumbers, aught prefaging good
 Thou see'st, propitious O! confirm it all;
 But if of dire portent, and fraught with ill
 To me and mine they came, avert the omen,
 And send the evil back upon my foes!
 O! if there are, whose fraudulent arts conspire
 To cast me forth from all my present bliss,
 Let 'em not prosper, but protect me still!
 Grant me to live and reign in quiet here,
 To spend each happy hour with those I love;
 With those my children who have ne'er offended
 By malice, pride and bitterness of soul.
 Grant this, indulgent Phœbus! what remains
 Unask'd, thou see'st; for nought escapes the eye
 Of gods, such knowledge have the sons of Jove!

S C E N E II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, CLYTÆMNESTRA,
 ELECTRA, CHORUS.

G O V E R N O R.

Is this the royal palace of Ægisthus?

C H O R U S.

With those my children &c. Iphianassa and Chrysothemis, who had not affronted her; in opposition to Electra, who had.

What remains unask'd, &c. Most probably the death of Orestes and Electra, which she did not dare to mention in the presence of her daughter. Clytemnestra's character is finely drawn; her very prayers we see are wicked, and agreeable to her actions.

ELECTRA.

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CHORUS.

Stranger, it is.

GOVERNOR.

And this, for such her form
And look majestic speak her, is his queen;
Is it not so?

CHORUS.

It is.

GOVERNOR.

Great sov'reign, hail!
With joyful news I come, and from a friend,
To thee and to Ægisthus.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Stranger, welcome;
Say, first, from whom thy message?

GOVERNOR.

From Phanoteus

A Phocian sends thee things of utmost moment.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Of moment say'st thou? what? impart them quick.
Of friendly import, if from thence they come,
I know they must be.

GOVERNOR.

Briefly then, 'tis this:

Orestes

Orestes is no more.

E L E C T R A.

Undone Electra!

Now am I lost indeed.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

What say'st thou? speak,

Regard not her; go on.

G O V E R N O R.

I say again,

Orestes is no more.

E L E C T R A.

Then what am I?

I too am nothing.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A. [to Electra.]

Get thee hence, away!

Disturb us not: most welcome messenger;

• [to the Governor.]

Go on, I beg thee, let me hear it all;

Say how he dy'd; tell ev'ry circumstance.

G O V E R N O R.

For that I came, and I will tell thee all.

Know then, Orestes at the Pythian games,

Eager

Orestes at the Pythian games, &c. Our modern critics will perhaps be of opinion, that this description of the Pythian games, so much admired by the favour-
ers

Eager for glory met assembled Greece;
 Soon as the herald's far-resounding voice
 Proclaim'd the course, the graceful youth appear'd,
 And was by all admir'd: successful soon
 He reach'd the goal, and bore his prize away.
 Ne'er did these eyes behold such feats perform'd
 By mortal strength; in ev'ry course superior
 He rose victorious: theme of ev'ry tongue
 Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' son,
 Who led the Græcian host; but O! in vain
 Doth human valour strive, when pow'r divine
 Pursues vindictive! the succeeding morn
 Uprose the sun, and with him all the train
 Of youthful rivals in the chariot race;
 One from Achaia, one from Sparta came,

T

Of

ers of antiquity, is too long, and rather interrupts than carries on the business of the drama; it will be in vain therefore to inform them, that this circumstantial detail was necessary to give the story an air of veracity in the eyes of the person to whom it is related, at the same time that the author had by this means an opportunity of shewing his poetical and descriptive talents in the narration.

In ev'ry course superior, &c. The πενταθλον or quinquertium, here alluded to, consisted of five exercises, viz. leaping, running, throwing, darting, and wrestling; Orestes conquer'd in every one of them; this was the business of the first day of the games, the second was employ'd in the chariot-race, which is here minutely and accurately described.

One from Achaia, &c. In the Greek it is the first from Achaia, the second from Sparta, and so on to the tenth, which would have made an awkward appearance in English; I have therefore taken the liberty to vary the method of enumerating them in the translation.

Of Afric's sons advanc'd a noble pair,
 And join'd the throng; with these Orestes drove
 His swift Theſſalian ſteeds; Ætolia next
 For yellow courſers fam'd; and next Magnesia;
 And Athens, built by hands divine, ſent forth
 Her ſkilful charioteer; an Ænian next
 Drove his white Horſes thro' the field; and laſt
 A brave Bæotian clos'd the warrior train.
 And now in order rang'd, as each by lot
 Determin'd ſtood, forth at the trumpet's ſound
 They ruſh'd together, ſhook their glitt'ring reins,
 And laſh'd their foaming courſers o'er the plain.
 Loud was the din of ratt'ling cars involv'd
 In duſty clouds; cloſe on each other preſt
 The rival youths, together ſtopt, and turn'd
 Together all: the hapleſs Ænian firſt,
 His fiery ſteeds impatient of ſubjection,
 Entangled on the Lybian chariot hung;
 Confuſion ſoon and terror thro' the croud
 Diſaſtrous ſpread; the jarring axles rung;

Wheel

Athens, built by hands divine. Sophocles, who was an Athenian, takes every opportunity of doing honour to his countrymen; Athens, we ſee, is diſtinguiſh'd by him in the liſt as built by hands divine; and the Athenian charioteer ſeleſted from the rival chiefs, to contend with his hero Orestes, who had eaſily overcome all the reſt.

Wheel within wheel now crack'd, till Chrysa's field
Was with the scatter'd ruins quite o'erspread.
Th' Athenian cautious view'd the distant danger,
Drew in the rein, and turn'd his car aside,
Then past them all. Orestes, who secure
Of conquest lagg'd behind, with eager pace
Now urg'd his rapid course, and swift pursu'd:
Sharp was the contest; now th' Athenian first,
And now Orestes o'er his courfers hung,
Now side by side they ran; when to the last
And fatal goal they came, Atrides' son,
As chance with slacken'd rein he turn'd the car,
Full on the pillar struck, tore from the wheel
Its brittle spokes, and from his seat down drop'd
Precipitate; entangled in the reins
His fiery courfers dragg'd him o'er the field,
Whilst shrieking crouds with pity view'd the youth,
Whose gallant deeds deserv'd a better fate.
Scarce cou'd they stop the rapid car, or loose
His mangled corse, so drench'd in blood, so chang'd,
That scarce a friend cou'd say it was Orestes.
Strait on the pile they burnt his sad remains,
And, in an urn enclos'd, a chosen few
From Phocis sent have brought his ashes home,

To reap due honours in his native land.

Thus have I told thee all, a dreadful tale !
But O ! how far more dreadful to behold it,
And be like me a witness of the scene !

C H O R U S.

Ah me ! the royal race, the antient house
Of my lov'd master is no more !

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Great Jove !

Th' event was happy, but 'tis mix'd with woe.
For, O ! 'tis bitter to reflect, that life
And safety must be purchas'd by misfortunes.

G O V E R N O R.

Why grieve you, madam ?

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

'Tis a bitter task

To bring forth children ; tho' a mother's wrong'd,
A mother cannot hate the babe she bore.

G O V E R N O R.

Then with ungrateful news in vain I came ;

CLY-

'Tis mix'd with woe. Dacier highly commends the art of the poet in Clytæmnestra's expression of uneasiness at the death of Orestes ; as to have received the news without any marks of tenderness or compassion would have been shocking to nature and humanity. But perhaps a better reason for this dissembled sorrow may be drawn from her willingness to preserve some decency and appearance of virtue in the eyes of the messenger.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

O no; most welcome is the man who brings
 Such joyful tidings, that a thankless child
 Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
 To live a voluntary exile from me;
 Ne'er to these eyes return'd, but absent rag'd,
 And threaten'd vengeance for his murther'd father;
 Day had no rest for me, nor did the night
 Bring needful slumbers, thoughts of instant death
 Appall'd me ever; but my fears are gone;
 He cannot hurt me now, nor worse than him,
 This vile domestic plague, who haunts me still
 To suck my vital blood; but henceforth safe,
 Spite of her threats, shall Clytæmnestra live.

E L E C T R A.

Now, my Orestes, I indeed must mourn
 Thy cruel fate, embitter'd by reproach,
 And from a mother's tongue; this is not well.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

With him it is, and wou'd it were with thee!

E L E C T R A.

Attend, O! Nemesis! and hear the dead!

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

She heard that voice which best deserv'd her ear,
 And her decrees are just.

E L E C T R A.

Go on, proud woman ;
 Insult us now, whilst fortune smiles upon thee.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Dost thou then hope that we shall fall hereafter ?

E L E C T R A.

No ! we are fall'n ourselves, and cannot hurt thee.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Thrice worthy is that messenger of joy
 Whose gladsome news shall stop thy clam'rous tongue.

G O V E R N O R.

My task perform'd, permit me to retire.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

No, stranger, that were an affront to thee,
 And to our friend who sent thee here. Go in,
 And leave that noisy wretch to bellow forth
 Her sorrows, and bewail her lost Orestes.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E III.

E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

E L E C T R A.

Mark'd ye, my friends, did ye observe her tears ?
 Did she lament him ? did the mother weep
 For her lost child ? O no ; she smiled and left me ;

Wretched

Wretched Electra! O my dear Orestes!
 Thou hast undone me; thou wert all my hope.
 I thought thou woud'st have liv'd to aid my vengeance
 For our lov'd father's death; depriv'd of both
 Whither shall I betake me! left at last
 A slave to those whom most on earth I hate,
 The cruel murth'ers; must it then be so?
 Never, O never! thus bereft of all,
 Here will I lay me down, and on this spot
 End my sad days; if it offend the tyrants,
 Let 'em destroy me; 'twill be kindly done;
 Life is a pain; I wou'd not wish to keep it.

C H O R U S.

Where is thy thunder, Jove? or, where thy pow'r,

O

Here will I lay me down. Electra, shock'd at the behaviour of Clytæmnestra, and apprehensive of still worse treatment than she had ever yet received, is resolv'd never to re-enter the palace of Ægisthus; but lays herself down in anguish on the ground to lament her misfortunes. There is something not unlike this in Shakspear's king John, where Constance throws herself on the Earth. See king John, act 3, scene 1.

Where is thy thunder, Jove, &c. I see no reason for making the alteration here proposed by Dacier, and putting these words into the mouth of Electra; surely the reflection comes naturally from the chorus, who had been witnesses of Clytæmnestra's behaviour on the news of Orestes' death. It may not be improper here to observe that this is generally call'd the second intermede, or song of the chorus; who in conjunction with Electra remaining on the stage, as at the end of the first act, sing a kind of dirge, lamenting the miseries of their friend, and endeavouring to comfort her under them; this is all in Strophe and Antistrophe, and most probably was set to music: it shou'd therefore, according to my plan, have

O Phœbus! if thou dost behold this deed
And not avenge it?

E L E C T R A.

Oh!

C H O R U S.

Why mourn'st thou thus?

E L E C T R A.

Alas!

C H O R U S.

O! do not groan thus.

E L E C T R A.

Thou destroy'st me.

C H O R U S.

How have I hurt thee?

E L E C T R A.

Why thus vainly try

To give me comfort, when I know he's dead?

You but insult my woes.

C H O R U S.

Yet weep not thus.

Think

have been put into rhyme, to distinguish it from the other parts of the drama; but as it consists of question and answer, it would have made but a strange and uncouth appearance in that garb. I have therefore preserved the blank verse, which my readers will, I believe, think with me was much more suitable to it.

Think on the golden bracelet that betray'd
Amphiaraus, who now——

ELECTRA.

O! me!

CHORUS.

——In bliss

Immortal reigns among the shades below:

ELECTRA.

Alas!

CHORUS.

No more; a woman was the cause,
Th' accursed cause.

ELECTRA.

She suffer'd, did she not?

CHORUS.

She did; she perish'd.

ELECTRA.

Yes; I know it well;
He found a kind avenger of his wrongs,
But I have none, for he is ravish'd from me.

U

CHORUS.

The golden bracelet that betray'd Amphiaraus. Amphiaraus was a famous soothsayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was solicited by Adrastus to assist Polynices, his son-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreseeing by his art that if he went he should be slain, hid himself, but was discover'd by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the siege of Thebes, perish'd there. Alcmaon his son revenged his father's death, and slew his mother Eriphyle.

E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

Thou art indeed unhappy.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis too true.

I am most wretched, it comes thick upon me;
My sorrows never cease.

C H O R U S.

We see thy woes.

E L E C T R A.

Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort;
There is no hope.

C H O R U S.

What say'st thou?

E L E C T R A.

There is none,
None left for me; my noble brother slain.

C H O R U S.

Death is the lot of human race.

E L E C T R A.

But, oh!

Not death like his; entangled in the reins,
His mangled body dragg'd along the field.

C H O R U S.

A strange unthought of chance.

ELECTRA.

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ELECTRA.

And then to fall

A wretched stranger in a foreign land.

CHORUS.

O! horrible!

ELECTRA.

No sister there to close

His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb,

Or pay the last sad tributary tear.

[Exeunt.]

End of ACT II.

U 2

ACT III.

CHRYSOthemis, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOthemis.

FORGIVE me, sister, if my hasty steps

Prefs unexpected on thee; but I come
With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils,
And make thee happy.

ELECTRA.

What can'st thou have found
To soften ills that will admit no cure?

CHRYSOthemis.

Orestes is arrived; as sure as here
I stand before thee, the dear youth is come.

ELECTRA.

Can'st thou then make a mock'ry of my woes?
Or dost thou rave?

CHRY-

My hasty steps, &c. Camerarius, in a note on this passage, very gravely remarks, that a lady should never run, "quoniam in mulieribus cunctabunda omnia magis probantur," because it's more becoming in women to do every thing deliberately. Dacier likewise, with the refinement of a true French critic, observes, that it would be highly indecent in a virgin and a princess to walk fast: Sophocle, ~~il~~ *ne manque pas à une seule bien-séance.* Of such sagacious animadversions as these, do principally consist the illustrations of both the antient and modern commentators on Sophocles; scarce one of which (Brumoy excepted) seems to have read him with any taste or judgment.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

No, by our father's gods,
I do not mean to scoff; but he is come.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! who told thee so? What tongue deceiv'd
Thy credulous ear?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Know, from myself alone
I learn'd the truth, and confirmations strong
Oblige me to believe it.

E L E C T R A.

What firm proof
Can'st thou produce? what hast thou seen or known
To raise such flatt'ring hopes?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

O! by the gods
I beg thee but to hear me, then approve
Or blame, impartial.

E L E C T R A.

If to tell thy tale
Can give thee pleasure, say it; I attend.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Know then, that soon as to our father's tomb
Eager I came, my wond'ring eyes beheld

Down:

Down from its fide a milky fountain flow,
 As lately pour'd by some benignant hand;
 With various flow'rs the sacred spot adorn'd
 Encreas'd my doubts; on ev'ry fide I look'd
 And listen'd long impatient for the tread
 Of human footsteps there; but all was peace.
 Fearless approaching then the hallow'd spot,
 I saw it spread with fresh devoted hair;
 Instant my soul recall'd its dearest hope,
 Nor doubted whence the pious off'rings came;
 I snatch'd them up and silent gaz'd, while joy
 Sprang in my heart, and fill'd my eyes with tears.
 They were, they must be his; ourselves alone
 Excepted, who cou'd bring them? 'twas not I,
 And 'tis not giv'n to thee to leave these walls
 Ev'n for the gods; our mother scarce wou'd do
 So good an office; or ev'n grant she might,
 We must have known it soon; be confident,

It

Our mother scarce, &c. This assertion may probably appear strange from the mouth of Chrysothemis, who had herself so lately been sent by Clytæmnestra with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon; why therefore might not she have made these libations also? There is no way of reconciling this seeming inconsistency, but by supposing that the libations here mention'd were of a different nature from the former; the first were an expiatory offering to turn aside the vengeance of the deceased; the last, of that kind which was generally made use of to signify the peculiar love and affection of those who made them.

It was Orestes then; rejoice, Electra;
 Sister, rejoice; the same destructive pow'r
 Doth not for ever rule; behold at last
 A milder god, and happier days appear.

E L E C T R A.

Madness, and folly! how I pity thee!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Have I not brought most joyful tidings to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! thou know'st not where nor what thou art.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Not know it? not believe what I have seen?

E L E C T R A.

I tell thee, wretched as thou art, he's dead;
 He and thy hop'd-for bliss are gone together.
 Thou must not think of him.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

A wretch indeed

I am, if this be so; but O! from whom,
 Where didst thou learn the fatal news?

E L E C-

He's dead. The hopes and joy of Chrysothemis are finely contrasted by the grief and despair of Electra. One brings the news of his arrival, the other of his death; thus the spectator, who is already acquainted with the truth, is made to sympathize with the unhappy sisters, and grows impatient for the discovery. Every subordinate circumstance, we see, by the artful conduct of the poet, is introduced to prepare the principal event, and heighten the terror and surprise of the catastrophe.

E L E C T R A.

From one,
Who was a witness of his death.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Where is he?
Amazement chills my soul.

E L E C T R A.

He is within;
And no unwelcome guest to Clytæmnestra.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Alas! who then cou'd bring these pious gifts?

E L E C T R A.

Some friend to lost Orestes plac'd them there.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I flew with joy to tell thee better news,
And little thought to hear so sad a tale.
The griefs I came to cure are present still,
And a new weight of woes is come upon us.

E L E C T R A.

But know, my sister, all may yet be well,
If thou wilt hear me.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Can I raise the dead?

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

I am not mad that I shou'd ask it of thee.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

What wou'dst thou have me do?

E L E C T R A.

I'd have thee act

As I shall dictate to thee.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If aught good

It may produce, I do consent.

E L E C T R A.

Remember,

That if we hope to prosper, we must bear;

Success in all that's human must depend

On patience and on toil.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I know it well,

And stand resolv'd to bear my part in all,

E L E C T R A.

Hear then the solemn purport of my soul.

Thou know'st too well how friendless and forlorn

We both are left, by death bereav'd of all

Who cou'd support us; whilst Orestes liv'd

I cherish'd flatt'ring thoughts of sweet revenge,

But he is gone, and thou art now my hope.
Yes, thou must join (for I will tell thee all)
With thy Electra to destroy Ægisthus,
To kill the murth'rer; why shou'd we delay?
Is aught of comfort left? thou can'st but weep
Thy ravish'd fortunes torn unjustly from thee;
Thou canst but mourn thy loss of nuptial rites,
And each domestic bliss; for O! my sister,
The tyrant cannot be so weak of soul
As e'er to suffer our detested race
To send new branches forth for his destruction:
Assist me then; so shalt thou best deserve
A father's praises and a brother's love;
So shalt thou still, as thou wert born, be free,
And gain a partner worthy of thy bed.
Dost thou not hear th' applauding voice of fame,
And ev'ry tongue conspire to praise the deed?
Will they not mark us as we pass along,
And cry aloud, " behold the noble pair!
" The pious sisters who preserv'd their race,
" Whose daring souls, unaw'd by danger, fought
" The tyrants life, regardless of their own.
" What love to these, what reverence is due!
" These shall th' assembled nation throng to praise,

" And

“ And ev’ry feast with public honours crown,
 “ The fit reward of more than female virtue?
 Thus will they talk, my sister, whilst we live,
 And after death our names shall be immortal.
 Aid then a brother’s, aid a sister’s cause,
 Think on thy father’s wrongs, preserve Electra,
 Preserve thyself; and, O! remember well
 That, to the noble mind, a life dishonour’d
 Is infamy and shame.

C H O R U S.

Be prudence now
 The guide of both.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Her mind was sure disturb’d,
 My friends, or she wou’d ne’er have talk’d so wildly.
 Tell me, I beg thee tell me, my Electra,
 How cou’dst thou think so rash an enterprize
 Cou’d e’er succeed, or how request my aid?
 Hast thou consider’d what thou art? a woman,
 Weak and defenceless, to thy foes unequal.
 Fortune thou see’st each hour flows in upon them,
 Nor deigns to look on us: what hand shall deal
 The fatal blow and pass unpunish’d for it?
 Take heed, my sister, lest, thy counsel heard,

A heavier fate than what we now lament
 Fall on us both; what will our boasted fame
 Avail us then? It is not death alone
 We have to fear; to die is not the worst
 Of human ills, it is to wish for death
 And be refus'd the boon; consider well,
 E'er we destroy ourselves and all our race.
 Be patient, dear Electra; for thy words,
 As they had ne'er been utter'd, here they rest.
 • Learn to be wise at last; and when thou know'st
 Resistance vain, submit to pow'rs superior.

C H O R U S.

Submit, convinc'd that prudence is the first
 Of human blessings.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis as I expected;
 I knew full well thou woudst reject my counsel,
 But I can act alone; nor shall this arm
 Shrink at the blow, or leave it's work unfinish'd.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wou'd thou hadst shewn this so much vaunted prowess
 When our lov'd father dy'd!

E L E C T R A.

I was the same

By

By nature then, but of a weaker mind.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Be fure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

E L E C T R A.

Thy aid will ne'er increafe it.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

'Twill be wanted;

For thofe, who act thus rashly, muft expect

The fate they merit.

E L E C T R A.

I admire thy prudence,

But I deteft thy cowardice.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I hear thee

With patience; for the time muft one day come

When thou fhalt praife me.

E L E C T R A.

Never:

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Be that left

For time to judge; enough remains.

E L E C T R A.

Away;

There's no dependence on thee.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

But there is,
Had'st thou a mind dispos'd for it's acceptance.

E L E C T R A.

Go, tell thy mother all.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I am not yet

So much thy enemy.

E L E C T R A.

And yet wou'd lead me
To infamy.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

To safety and to wisdom.

E L E C T R A.

Must I then judge as thy superior reason
May dictate to me?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

When thy better mind
Shall come, I'll not refuse to follow thee.

E L E C T R A.

Pity who talks so well, shou'd act so poorly!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

That censure falls on thee.

E L E C T R A.

What I have said
Is truth.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Truth, sister, may be dangerous.

E L E C T R A.

Rather than thus submit I will not live.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Hereafter thou wilt praise me.

E L E C T R A.

I shall act
As seems most fit, nor wait for thy direction.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Art thou resolv'd then? wilt thou not repent
And take my counsel?

E L E C T R A.

Counsel, such as thine,
Is of all ills the worst.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Because, Electra,
Thou dost not seem to understand it.

E L E C T R A.

Know then,
That long ere this I had determin'd all,

C H R Y-

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Then fare thee well; thou canst not bear my words,
Nor I thy actions.

E L E C T R A.

Go thy ways; henceforth
I will not commune with thee; not thy pray'rs,
No, nor thy tears shou'd ever bend me to it;
Such idle commerce were the height of folly.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If thou dost think this wisdom, think so still;
But when destruction comes, thou wilt approve
My better counsel, and be wise too late.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Man's ungrateful wretched race,
Shall the birds of heav'n disgrace,
Whose ever-watchful, ever-pious young,
Protect the feeble parent whence they sprung?

But

Man's ungrateful, &c. This, according to the received division into five acts, is the third song or intermede of the chorus, and closes the second act, which we may observe is thus made to consist of only a single scene; an absurdity which need not be pointed out to the judicious reader. The chorus in this song, struck by the piety and resolution of Electra, lament her condition, and blame the coldness of Chrysothemis, who had refused to join her in revenging the death of their father.

But if the blast of angry Jove
 Hath pow'r to strike, or justice reigns above,
 Not long unpunish'd shall such crimes remain;
 When thou, O fame! the messenger of woe,
 Shalt bear these tidings to the realms below,
 Tidings to Grecia's chiefs of sorrow and of pain.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Bid the sad Atridæ mourn
 Their house by cruel faction torn;
 Tell 'em, no longer by affection join'd,
 The tender sisters bear a friendly mind;
 The poor Electra now alone,
 Making her fruitless solitary moan,
 Like Philomela weeps her father's fate;
 Fearless of death and ev'ry human ill,
 Resolv'd her steady vengeance to fulfill;
 Was ever child so good, or piety so great?

S T R O P H E II.

Still are the virtuous and the good
 By adverse fortune unsubdu'd,
 Nor e'er will stoop to infamy and shame;
 Thus Electra dauntless rose
 The War to wage with virtue's foes,
 To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

E L E C T R A.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Far, far above thy enemies,
In pow'r and splendor mayst thou rise,
And future bliss compensate present woe!
For thou hast shewn thy pious love,
By all that's dear to heav'n above,
Or sacred held by mortals here below.

[Exeunt.]

End of A C T III.

A C T IV.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, (with ATTENDANTS)

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

SAY, virgins, if by right instruction led
This way, I tend to——

CHORUS.

Whither wou'dst thou go?

ORESTES.

The palace of Ægisthus.

CHORUS.

Stranger, well

Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

ORESTES.

Who then amongst your train shall kindly speak
A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news
Of highest import?

CHORUS.

Be that office her's, [pointing to Electra.]

Whom bound by nature's ties it best befits.

ORESTES.

Go then, and say from Phocis are arriv'd
Who beg admittance to the king.

E L E C T R A.

Alas!

And com'st thou then to prove the dreadful tale
Already told?

O R E S T E S:

What you have heard I know not,
But of Orestes came I here to speak
By Strophius's command.

E L E C T R A.

What is it, say;

O how I dread thy message!

O R E S T E S. [shewing the urn.]
Here behold.

His poor remains——

E L E C T R A.

O! lost, undone Electra!

Tis then too plain, and mis'ry is compleat.

O R E S T E S.

If for Orestes thus thy sorrows flow,

Know that within this urn his ashes lye.

E L E C-

What you have heard I know not. To prevent any suspicion of fraud or connivance, Orestes pretends to be an utter stranger to the message brought by the governor. The news coming thus by different hands, and at different times, confirms the report more strongly, and heighens the surprize at the discovery.

E L E C T R A.

Do they indeed? then let me, by the gods
 I do intreat thee, let me snatch them from thee,
 Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate,
 And mourn our hapless race.

O R E S T E S.

Give her the urn,
 Whoe'er she be; for not with hostile mind
 She craves the boon; perhaps some friend, perhaps
 By blood united.

E L E C T R A. [taking the Urn.]

O! ye dear remains
 Of my Orestes, the most lov'd of men!
 How do I see thee now! how much unlike
 What my fond hopes presag'd, when last we parted!
 I sent thee forth with all the bloom of youth
 Fresh on thy cheek, and now, O! dismal change!
 I bear thee in these hands an empty shade.
 Wou'd I had dy'd e'er I had sent thee hence,
 E'er I had sav'd thee from the tyrant's hand!
 Wou'd thou had'st dy'd thyself that dreadful day,

And

Whoe'er she be. Orestes must already imagine that the person he talk'd to was one of his sisters; but as he had been so long absent could not be sure that it was Electra; the chorus soon after puts him out of doubt by mentioning her name.

And join'd thy murther'd father in the tomb,
 Rather than thus a wretched exile fall'n,
 Far from thy sister, in a foreign land !
 I was not there with pious hands to wash
 Thy breathless corps, or from the greedy flame
 To gather up thy ashes ; what have all
 My pleasing toils, my fruitless cares avail'd,
 Ev'n from thy infant years, that as a mother
 I watch'd thee still, and as a mother lov'd ?
 I wou'd not trust thee to a servant's hand,
 But was myself the guardian of thy youth,
 Thy dear companion ; all is gone with thee ;
 Alas ! thy death, like the devouring storm,
 Hath borne down all ; my father is no more,
 And thou art gone, and I am going too ;
 Our foes rejoice ; our mother, mad with joy,
 Smiles at our mis'ries ; that unnat'ral mother,

She

To wash thy breathless corps. The custom of washing the body of the deceased is very antient ; this office was always perform'd by the nearest relations ; Socrates as we are inform'd by Plato, wash'd himself before his execution, probably to prevent it's being done by strangers ; Alcestis, likewise, in Euripides, after she had determined to dye for her husband, washes herself. The Romans adopted this custom from the Greeks ; and we find the mother of Euryalus, making the same complaint as Electra,

Nec te tua funera mater
 Produxi, pressive oculos aut vulnera lavi.

VIRG. ÆN. l. 9.

She whom thou oft has promis'd to destroy;
 But cruel fate hath blasted all my hopes,
 And for my dear Orestes, left me nought.
 But this poor shadow: O! th' accursed place,
 Where I had sent thee! O! my hapless brother,
 Thou hast destroy'd Electra: ~~take me then,~~
 O! take me to thee! let this urn enclose
 My ashes too, and dust to dust be join'd,
 That we may dwell together once again;
 In life united by one hapless fate,
 I wou'd not wish in death to be divided;
 The dead are free from sorrows.

C H O R U S.

Fair Electra!

Do not indulge thy griefs; but, O! remember,
 Sprung from a mortal like thyself, Orestes
 Was mortal too, that we are mortal all.

O R E S T E S.

[aside.]

What shall I say? I can refrain no longer.

E L E C T R A.

Why this emotion?

O R E S T E S.

Dust to dust. In the original, it is τὴν μὴδ' ἐστὶ το μὴδ' ἐν, "nothing to nothing;" I have taken the liberty to adopt a phrase familiar to ourselves, and which equally expresses the sense of my author.

O R E S T E S. [looking at Electra.]

Can it be Electra?

That lovely form?

E L E C T R A.

It is indeed that wretch.

O R E S T E S.

O! dreadful!

E L E C T R A.

Stranger, dost thou weep for me?

O R E S T E S.

By impious hands to perish thus!

E L E C T R A.

For me

Doubtless thou weep'st, for I am chang'd indeed.

O R E S T E S.

Of nuptial rites, and each domestic joy

To live depriv'd!

E L E C T R A.

Why dost thou gaze upon me?

O R E S T E S.

Alas! I did not know I was so wretched.

E L E C T R A.

Why, what hath made thee so?

O R E S T E S.

O R E S T E S.

I fee thy woes.

E L E C T R A.

Not half of them.

O R E S T E S.

Can there be worfe than these!

E L E C T R A.

To live with murtherers!

O R E S T E S.

What murth'ers, whom?

E L E C T R A.

The murth'ers of my father; bound to serve them.

O R E S T E S.

Who binds thee?

E L E C T R A.

One who calls herself a mother;

A name she little merits.

O R E S T E S.

But say, how?

Doth she withhold the means of life, or act
With brutal violence to thee?

E L E C T R A.

Both, alas!

Are my hard lot; she try's a thousand means

To make me wretched.

O R E S T E S.

And will none assist,

Will none defend thee?

E L E C T R A.

None. My only hope

Lies buried there.

O R E S T E S.

O! how I pity thee!

E L E C T R A.

'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me,

None but thyself; art thou indeed a stranger,

Or doth some nearer tie unite our sorrows?

O R E S T E S.

I cou'd unfold a tale; —but, say, these virgins,

May I depend on them?

E L E C T R A.

'They are our friends,

And faithful all.

O R S S T E S.

Then lay the urn aside,

And I will tell thee.

E L E C T R A.

Do not take it from me;

Do not, dear stranger.

O R E S T E S.

But I must indeed.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, I beg thee.

O R E S T E S.

Come, you'll not repent it.

E L E C T R A.

O! my poor brother! if thy dear remains
Are wrested from me, I am most unhappy.

O R E S T E S.

No more; thou must not grieve for him.

E L E C T R A.

Not grieve

For my Orestes?

O R E S T E S.

No; you shou'd not weep.

E L E C T R A.

Am I unworthy of him then?

O R E S T E S.

O! no!

But do not grieve.

E L E C T R A.

Not when I bear the ashes

Of my dear brother!

O R E S T E S.

But, they are not there,
Unless by fiction, and a well-wrought tale
That hath deceiv'd thee.

E L E C T R A.

Where then is his tomb?

O R E S T E S.

The living need none.

E L E C T R A.

Ha! what say'st thou?

O R E S T E S.

Truth.

E L E C T R A.

Does he then live?

O R E S T E S.

If I have life, he lives.

E L E C T R A.

And art thou he?

O R E S T E S.

Look here, and be convinc'd;

This

The living need none. The Greek is *τὸ ζῶντος ἐκ ἐστὶ τάφος*, which I have translated literally. Brumoy, who is seldom guilty of mistakes, has let the sense slip him, and only says, "il est plein de vie."

This mark, 'tis from our father.

ELECTRA.

O! blest hour!

ORESTES.

Blessed indeed!

ELECTRA.

Art thou then here?

ORESTES.

I am.

ELEC-

This mark. What this mark was, has greatly puzzled the commentators; the scholiasts, whose conjectures are generally whimsical, will needs have it to be some remains of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, which was visible in all his descendants, as those of Cadmus were mark'd with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius, and after him Brumoy, call it a ring, or seal, which indeed is the most natural interpretation of the Greek word σφραγίς; though it may be said in support of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and therefore a better proof of identity in regard to the person of Orestes.

Art thou then here? This discovery is doubtless the principal and most interesting scene in the tragedy of Electra, and upon the whole much better conducted by Sophocles than by either of his rivals on the same subject. The effect which it had upon the audience, was, we may imagine, equal to its merit. Aulus Gellius tells us a remarkable story of a certain actor, named Polus, who having undertaken the part of Electra, in order to enter more fully into the character he was to represent, brought upon the stage an urn containing the ashes of his own son, which he wept over and embraced as the ashes of Orestes; his feelings were so intense, and his performance so exquisite on this occasion, that the spectators no longer consider'd it as a mere representation, but were fill'd with real grief, and dissolved in tears.

Dacier is of opinion that the dialogue between Orestes and Electra on this occasion, is too prolix, and must be shorten'd before it could meet with any applause on a modern theatre.

E L E C T R A.

Do I embrace thee?

O R E S T E S.

May st thou do it long!

E L E C T R A.

O! my companions! O! my dearest friends!

Do ye not see Orestes, once by art

And cruel fiction torn from Life and me,

But now by better art to life restor'd?

C H O R U S.

Daughter, we do; and see 'midst all our woes

From ev'ry eye fast flow the tears of joy.

E L E C T R A.

O! ye are come, my friends, in happiest hour,

Ev'n to behold, to find again the man

Whom your souls wish'd for, ye are come.

C H O R U S.

We are;

But O! in silence hide thy joys, Electra.

E L E C T R A.

Wherefore in silence?

C H O R U S.

O! ye are come, &c. From this place, to that speech of Orestes which begins with, spend not thy time, &c, and which contains in the Greek near fifty short lines, the original is in Strophe and Antistrophe: I have made no change in the measure of the translation, for the reason given in a preceding note.

C H O R U S.

Left our foes within
Shou'd hear thee.

E L E C T R A.

Never, by the virgin pow'r
Of chaste Diana, will I ~~hide~~ my joys,
Nor meanly stoop to fear an idle throng
Of helpless women.

O R E S T E S.

Women have their pow'r,
And that thou know'st.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! and so I do;
For O! thou hast call'd back the sad remembrance
Of that misfortune which admits no cure,
And ne'er can be forgot.

O R E S T E S.

A fitter time
May come when we must think of that.

E L E C T R A.

All times,
All hours are fit to talk of justice in,
And best the present, now when I am free.

O R E S T E S.

O R E S T E S.

Thou art so, be so still.

E L E C T R A.

What's to be done?

O R E S T E S.

Talk not, when prudence shou'd restrain thy tongue.

E L E C T R A.

Who shall restrain it? who shall bind Electra

To fearful silence, when Orestes comes?

When thus I see thee here, beyond my thoughts,

Beyond my hopes,

O R E S T E S.

The gods have sent me to thee;

They bid me come.

E L E C T R A.

Indeed? more grateful still

Is thy return; if by the gods command

Thou cam'st, the gods will sure protect thee here.

O R E S T E S.

I wou'd not damp thy joys, and yet I fear

Lest they shou'd carry thee too far.

E L E C T R A.

O! no!

But after so long absence, thus return'd

To thy afflicted sister; sure thou woud'st not—

O R E S T E S.

Do what?

ELECTRA.

Thou woud'st not grudge me the dear pleasure
Of looking on thee.

O R E S T E S.

No; nor suffer any
To rob thee of it;

ELECTRA.

Shall I then?

O R E S T E S.

No doubt.

ELECTRA.

I hear that voice, my friends, I never thought
To hear again; ye know, when I receiv'd
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and sad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form, which never was forgotten.

O R E S T E S.

Spend not thy time in fruitless words, nor tell me
How Clytæmnestra lives, nor how Ægisthus
Hath lavish'd all our wealth; the present hour

A a

Demands

Demands our strict attention ; tell me how,
 Whether by fraud, or open force, our foes
 May best be vanquish'd ; let no chearful smile
 Betray thee to thy mother ; seem to grieve
 As thou wert wont ; when we have done the deed,
 Joy shall appear, and we will smile in safety.

E L E C T R A.

Thy will is mine ; not to myself I owe
 My present blifs, I have it all from thee,
 From thee, my brother ; nor shou'd aught persuade me
 To give Orestes ev'n a moment's pain.
 That were ungrateful to th' indulgent pow'r,
 Who thus hath smil'd propitious. Know, Ægisthus
 Has left the palace ; Clytæmnestra's there ;
 And for thy needless fears that I shou'd smile,
 Or wear a chearful face, I never shall ;
 Hatred so strong is rooted in my soul,
 The sight of them will make me sad enough.
 The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee,
 And add to the deceit ; for flow they must,
 When I behold thee in one happy hour
 Thus snatch'd from life, and thus to life restor'd.
 I cou'd not hope it ; O ! 'tis passing strange !
 If from the tomb our father shou'd arise,

And

wards them,
 as strangers ;
 was apprehen

And say he liv'd, I think I shou'd believe him;
And O! when thou art come so far, 'tis fit
I yield to thee in all, do thou direct
My ev'ry step; but know, had I been left
Alone, ev'n I wou'd not have fail'd in all,
But conquer'd bravely, or as bravely fell.

O R E S T E S.

No more. I hear the footsteps as of one
Coming this way.

E L E C T R A.

Strangers, go in, and bear
That which with joy they cannot but receive,
But which with joy they will not long possess.

S C E N E II.

G O V E R N O R of O R E S T E S, E L E C T R A,
O R E S T E S, C H O R U S.

G O V E R N O R.

Madness and folly thus to linger here!
Have ye no thought? is life not worth your care?
Do ye not know the dangers that surround you?

A a 2

Had

Strangers, go in, &c. Electra, inform'd that some one was coming towards them, changes her tone and manner, and addresses Orestes and Pylades as strangers; what she says, we may observe, is purposely ambiguous, as she was apprehensive of being over-heard.

Had I not watch'd myself before the palace,
 E'er ye had enter'd, all your secret plan
 Had been discover'd to our foes within;
 Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy,
 And lengthen'd converse; 'tis not fitting now,
 Go in; away, delays are dangerous
 At such an hour; our fate depends upon it.

O R E S T E S.

May I with safety? is all well within?

G O V E R N O R.

None can suspect you.

O R E S T E S.

Spake you of my death

As we determin'd?

G O V E R N O R.

Living as thou art,

They do account thee one among the dead.

O R E S T E S.

And are they glad? what say they?

G O V E R N O R.

By and by

We'll talk of that; let it suffice, that all

Is right within; and that which most they think so,

May prove most fatal to them.

ELECTRA.

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ELECTRA. [pointing to the GOVERNOR.]

Who is this?

ORESTES.

Do you not know?

ELECTRA.

I cannot recollect him.

ORESTES.

Not know the man to whom you trusted me?

Under whose care——

ELECTRA.

When? how?

ORESTES.

To Phocis sent,

I 'scap'd the tyrant.

ELECTRA.

Can it then be he,

Among the faithless only faithful found

When our dear father fell?

ORESTES.

It is the same.

ELECTRA. [to the GOVERNOR.]

Dearest of men, great guardian of our race,

Art thou then here? thou, who hast fav'd us both

From

From countless woes ; swift were thy feet to bring
 Glad tidings to me, and thy hand stretch'd forth
 It's welcome succour ; but, O ! why deceive me ?
 Why woud'st thou kill me with thy dreadful tale,
 Ev'n when thou had'st such happiness in store ?
 Hail ! father, hail ! for I must call thee so,
 Know, thou hast been to me, in one short day,
 Both the most hated, and most lov'd of men.

G O V E R N O R.

No more of that ; we shall have time enough
 To talk of it hereafter ; let us go ;
 This is the hour ; the queen is now alone,
 And not a man within ; if ye delay,
 Expect to meet more formidable foes,
 In wisdom and in numbers far superior.

O R E S T E S.

We will not talk, my Pylades, but act.
 Let us go in ; but to the gods, who guard
 This place, be first due adoration paid.

E L E C T R A.

Hear then, Apollo, great Lycæan, hear Their

Swift were thy feet, &c. The expression in the original is remarkable, ἁδίσαν ἔχων πρὸς αὐτὸν ὑπηρετήρια, dulcissimum habens pedum ministerium ; not unlike that of the prophet Isaiah, " how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings ! "

Hear then, Apollo, &c. Electra's prayer is made before the altar of Apollo, which stood at the entrance of the palace, where Clytæmnestra had paid her devotions

Their humble pray'r! O! hear Electra too,
 Who with unsparring hand her choicest gifts
 Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars;
 Accept the little all which now remains
 For me to give, accept my humblest pray'rs,
 My vows, my adorations; ~~smile~~ propitious
 On all our counsels! O! assist us now,
 And shew mankind what punishment remains
 For guilty mortals from offended heav'n.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Behold, he comes! the slaughter-breathing god
 Mars, ever thirsting for the murth'rer's blood;
 And see the dogs of war are close behind;

Nought

devotions in the former scene; this gives an air of solemnity to the action, and lessens the horror of the murder, by representing it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven.

Behold he comes &c. This is the fourth intermede or song of the chorus, and is supposed to divide the fourth and fifth acts; it is shorter, we may observe, than any of the rest, probably so contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the spectator, who is naturally eager to see the catastrophe; it is not therefore a time to amuse him with poetry and description, but to prepare him for the event; which is here done in a few words, finely adapted to that purpose.

The dogs of war. Κυνες ἀφύκτοι, gr. canes inevitabiles. Shakespear has exactly the same image, "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war."

See prologue to Henry the fifth.

Nought can escape their all-devouring rage;
 This did my conscious heart long since presage,
 And the fair dream that struck my raptur'd mind.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Th' avenger steals along with silent feet,
 And sharpen'd sword, to his paternal seat,
 His injur'd father's wrongs to vindicate;
 Conceal'd from all by Maia's fraudulent son,
 Who safe conducts him till the deed be done,
 Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate.

[Exeunt.]

Maia's fraudulent son. Mercury was the god of fraud and treachery, and call'd *δολιος*, or the deceiver; to him therefore was attributed all secret schemes and expeditions, good or bad. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar assistance in this place may likewise be accounted for from his relation to Myrtilus who was slain by Pelops.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

E L E C T R A.

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A C T V.

S C E N E I.

E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

E L E C T R A.

O! my dear friends, they are about it now;
The deed is doing; but be still.

C H O R U S.

What deed?

How? where?

E L E C T R A.

She doth prepare the fun'ral banquet;
But they are not far from her.

B b

C H O R U S.

O! my dear friends, &c. To avoid the horror of a murder on the stage, which, however familiar to us, the ancients consider'd as shocking and disgusting, Sophocles has contrived that it shall be done within the palace; but as Electra had received no commands from the oracle to revenge the death of Agamemnon, there would have been an indecency and impropriety in making her a witness or accessary to the murder: she therefore leaves her brother to kill Clytemnestra, and comes out; which at the same time gives her an opportunity of watching the arrival of Ægisthus, and preventing any interruption from him. The appearance of Electra on the stage in this place is absolutely necessary, as without it no reason could be assign'd for the return of Orestes; and thus the rest of the business of the drama must have been transacted out of sight of the audience, who would consequently remain strangers to the catastrophe.

The fun'ral banquet. The Greek is λεβητα κοσμει, lebetem parat, alluding to the περιδαιπνον, or funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytemnestra was already preparing for Orestes, whom she supposed dead: but they, says she, are not far from her; that is, they who are preparing one for her. The sentence, we see, is purposely left unfinish'd,

E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

Why then leave them?

E L E C T R A.

To watch Ægisthus, lest he steal upon us
And blast our purpose.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[Behind the scenes.]

O! I am betray'd!

My palace full of murth'ers; not a friend
Left to protect me.

E L E C T R A.

Some one cries within;

Did you not hear?

C H O R U S.

It is too horrible

For mortal ear; I tremble at the sound.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within]

Ægisthus, O! where art thou?

E L E C T R A.

Hark! again

The voice, and louder.

C L Y-

Some one cries within. Dacier puts these words into the mouth of one of the women that compose the chorus; because, (says he) Electra would never have said "*some one* cries out," as she knew it must be Clytæmnestra. The reader may take his choice in regard to this alteration; I have left it as it stands in the original, being a matter of no great consequence.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within.]

O! my child, my child!

Pity thy mother, pity her who bore thee.

E L E C T R A.

Be thine the pity which thou shewd'st to him,
And to his father.

C H O R U S.

O! unhappy kingdom!

O! wretched race! thy misery is full;

This day will finish all.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within]

O! I am wounded!

E L E C T R A.

Another stroke. Another, if thou can'st.

B b 2

C L Y-

O! unhappy kingdom! The chorus, though satisfied that Clytæmnestra deserved to die, and that this action of Orestes was commanded by the gods, are notwithstanding shock'd at the execution of it: they lament the present, and express their fear of future miseries in the house of Pelops: it is impossible, in their opinion, that a family could ever prosper where a wife had kill'd her husband, and a child murder'd his mother. There is something in this reflection striking and pathetic.

Another stroke, &c. "Ce mot fait fremir," (says Brumoy) "these words make one shudder." Dacier is likewise of opinion that all the art of the poet is insufficient to reconcile us to the fierceness of Electra. We cannot, (say these gentlemen) hear without horror a sister exhorting her brother to murder her own mother; nature starts at such inhumanity: Orestes should be revenged, but by some other hand. These, and many other accusations of the same kind, are brought against Sophocles, who stands indicted of cruelty by the French critics; their delicacy is, it seems, greatly shock'd at what they call the atrocity of the

E L E C T R A.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Ah me! again!

E L E C T R A.

O! that Ægisthus too
Groan'd with thee now.

C H O R U S.

Then vengeance is compleat.
The dead arise and shed their murth'ers blood
In copious streams.

S C E N E II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES,
ELECTRA, CHORUS.

E L E C T R A.

Behold them here; their hands
Dropping with gore; a pious sacrifice
To the great god of war. How is't Orestes?

O R E S T E S.

Tis very well; all's well, if there be truth

In

action. I am notwithstanding, of opinion, that the more indulgent English reader will acquit the poet, when he considers the manners and character of the people before whom the play was represented. The murder of Clytæmnestra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore look'd on by the ancients, however contrary to the dictates of nature, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itself, sufficient to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; besides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the story of Clytæmnestra, the persons concern'd in her death, and every circumstance attending it, was too well known to the whole audience to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.

In great Apollo's oracles, she's dead.

Thou need'st not fear a cruel mother now.

C H O R U S.

No more; Ægisthus comes.

E L E C T R A.

Instant go in;

Do ye not see him? joyful he returns.

C H O R U S.

Retire; thus far is right, go on, and prosper.

O R E S T E S.

Fear not, we'll do it.

C H O R U S.

But immediately.

O R E S T E S.

I'm gone.

[Exeunt Orestes, Pylades

E L E C T R A.

and Gov.]

For what remains here to be done,

Be it my care; I'll whisper in his ear

A few soft flatt'ring words, that he may rush

Unknowing down precipitate on ruin.

S C E N E III.

Æ G I S T H U S, E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Which of you knows ought of these Phocian guests,

Who

Which of you knows, &c. Clytæmnestra, we are to suppose, on receiving the news of Orestes's death, had sent a message to Ægisthus to acquaint him with

Who come to tell us of Orestes' death?

You first I ask, Electra, once so proud

And fierce of soul; it doth concern you most;

And therefore you, I think, can best inform me.

E L E C T R A.

Yes I can tell thee; is it possible

I shou'd not know it? that were not to know

A circumstance of dearest import to me.

Æ G I S T H U S,

Where are they then?

E L E C T R A,

Within,

Æ G I S T H U S.

And spake they truth?

E L E C T R A.

They did; a truth not prov'd by words alone,

But facts undoubted.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Shall we see him then?

E L E C T R A.

Ay, and a dreadful sight it is to see.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Thou art not wont to give me so much joy;

Now I am glad indeed.

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

Glad may'st thou be,
If aught there is in that can give thee joy.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Silence within, and let my palace gates
Be open'd all; that Argos and Mycenæ
May send her millions forth to view the fight;
And if there are who nourish idle hopes
That still Orestes lives, behold him here,
And learn submission, nor inflame the croud
Against their lawful sov'reign, lest they feel
An angry monarch's heaviest vengeance on them.

E L E C T R A.

Already I have learn'd the task, and yield
To pow'r superior.

S C E N E IV.

Opens and discovers the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA extended on a
bier, and cover'd with a veil.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES,
ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a croud
of SPECTATORS from the city.

Æ G I S T H U S.

What a fight is here!

O!

Glad may'st thou be. This speech of Electra, as well as that which goes before it, is purposely ambiguous. Ægisthus believes that she is telling of a fight.

O! deity supreme! this cou'd not be
 But by thy will; and whether Nemesis
 Shall still o'ertake me for my crime, I know not.
 Take off the veil, that I may view him well;
 He was by blood ally'd, and therefore claims
 Our decent sorrows.

O R E S T E S.

Take it off thyself;
 Tis not my office; thee it best befits
 To see and to lament.

Æ G I S T H U S.

And so it does;
 And I will do't: send Clytæmnestra hither. [taking off the veil.

O R E S T E S.

She is before thee.

Æ G I S T H U S.

This cou'd not be. The greek is *ἡ πεπτωκός*, which, literally translated, answers exactly to our phrase, "it did not *fall out*."

Tis not my office. All duties paid to the dead were perform'd by the nearest relations; Orestes, as supposed to be a stranger, had no business with them; Ægisthus therefore, himself, takes off the veil, which greatly heightens the surprize and horror of the catastrophe.

She is before thee. Of all the catastrophes, antient or modern, which I remember to have met with, this of Electra appears to me infinitely the most interesting, natural, and truly dramatic. There cannot possibly be a spectacle more affecting than the scene before us; a tyrant, murderer and adulterer, is represented as exulting on the death of the only person in the world whom he

ÆGISTHUS.

Ha! what do I see?

ORESTES.

Why, what's the matter? what affrights thee so?

Do you not see him?

ÆGISTHUS.

In what dreadful snare

Am I then fall'n?

ORESTES.

Dost thou not now behold

That thou art talking with the dead?

ÆGISTHUS.

Alas!

Too well I see it, and thou art—Orestes.

C c

ORESTES.

he had to fear, and whose dead body he expects to see before him; instead of this, on lifting up the veil, he is shock'd, not with the corps of Orestes, but that of his own wife; he perceives at once that Clytæmnestra is murther'd, that Orestes is alive and close to him, and that he has nothing to expect himself but immediate death: the sudden change of fortune to all the persons concern'd, the surprise and despair of Ægisthus, the joy and triumph in the countenances of Orestes and Electra, must altogether have exhibited a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael to execute: how it was acted on the Greek stage, we cannot pretend to determine, most probably with taste and judgment. Let the English reader conceive those inimitable actors, Quin, Garrick, and Cibber in the parts of Ægisthus, Orestes, and Electra, and from thence form to him-

O R E S T E S.

So great a prophet thou, and guess so ill!

Æ G I S T H U S.

I know that I am lost, undone for ever;
But let me speak to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, Orestes ;

No, not a word ; what can a moment's space
Profit a wretch like him to death devoted ?

Quick let him dye, and cast his carcase forth
To th' dogs and vultures ; they will best perform
Fit obsequies for him : by this alone
We can be free and happy.

O R E S T E S.

Get thee in ;

This is no time for talk ; thy life, thy life.

Æ G I S T H U S.

So great a prophet &c. This is a sneer of Orestes, on his being discover'd by Ægisthus, who had the reputation of a prophet.

They will best perform &c. Amongst the Greeks, to be deprived of the rites of sepulture was accounted a punishment worse than death itself. The original doth not mention dogs and vultures, but only says, let him be given *ταφευσι*, *solis pollinctoribus vel libitinariis*, to the only buriers (if we may use the expression) that he deserves.

Æ G I S T H U S.

But why go in? if what thou mean'st to do
 Be just, what need of darkness to conceal it?
 Why not destroy me here?

O R E S T E S.

It is not thine
 Now to command: hence to the fatal place
 Where our dear father fell, and perish there.

Æ G I S T H U S.

This palace then is doom'd to be the witness
 Of all the present, all the future woes
 Of Pelops' hapless race.

O R E S T E S.

Of thine, at least

C c 2

It

Hence to the fatal place &c. Ægisthus must be slain in the very spot where he kill'd Agamemnon; this heightens the justice of the action, and at the same time prevents the spilling of blood on the stage, which Sophocles judiciously avoids. The justice of Orestes puts us in mind of a similar passage in holy writ, "in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

See 1 Kings, 21, 19.

Of thine at least &c. The ancients were of opinion, that the words of dying men were always prophetic; Ægisthus therefore perceiving that his death was determined, foretells the fate of Orestes, doom'd to be tormented for the murder of his mother; Orestes interrupts his speech, by assuring him that his own fate was unavoidable: the English reader will recollect a parallel

It shall be witness; that's my prophecy,
And a most true one.

Æ G I S T H U S.

'Tis not from thy father.

O R E S T E S.

Thou talk'st, and time is lost. Away.

Æ G I S T H U S.

I follow.

O R E S T E S.

Thou shalt go first.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Think'st thou I mean to fly?

O R E S T E S.

No; but I'd make thy end most bitter to thee
In ev'ry circumstance, nor let thee choose
The softest means. Were all like thee to perish
Who violate the laws, 'twou'd lessen much
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

parallel passage in Shakespear, where Richard the third cuts off the prophecies of Henry the sixth, with

———Die, prophet, in thy speech;
For this among the rest was I ordain'd.

CHORUS.

O! race of Atreus! after all thy woes,
How art thou thus by one advent'rous deed
To freedom and to happiness restor'd!

F I N I S.



PHILOCTETES.



Dramatis Personæ.

U L Y S S E S, king of Ithaca.

N E O P T O L E M U S, son of Achilles.

P H I L O C T E T E S, son of Pæan and companion of Hercules.

A S P Y.

H E R C U L E S.

C H O R U S

Composed of the companions of ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

S C E N E Lemnos, near a grötto, in a rock by the sea-side.

PHILOCTETES.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

U L Y S S E S, N E O P T O L E M U S, A T T E N D A N T.

U L Y S S E S.

AT length, my noble friend, thou bravest son
Of a brave father, father of us all,
The great Achilles, we have reach'd the sho.
Of sea-girt Lemnos, desert and forlorn,
Where never tread of human step is seen,
Or voice of mortal heard, save his alone,
Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched son,

D d

Whom

Poor Philoctetes, &c. It is reported of Philoctetes, that Hercules, at his death on mount Hyllus, bequeath'd to him, as a testimony of his esteem, his bow and arrows; the extraordinary virtues of which we shall find frequently alluded to in this piece. Philoctetes after this, being in search of an altar dedicated to his deceased friend, in the island of Chrysa, was there bit by a serpent; the wound fester'd, and an incurable ulcer ensued, notwithstanding which he proceeded
in

Whom here I left; for such were my commands
 From Grecia's chiefs, when by his fatal wound
 Oppress'd, his groans and execrations dreadful
 Alarm'd our hosts, our sacred rites profan'd,
 And interrupted holy sacrifice.

But why shou'd I repeat the tale? the time
 Admits not of delay, we must not linger,
 Lest he discover our arrival here,
 And all our purpos'd fraud to draw him hence
 Be ineffectual; lend me then thy aid:

Surveying

in his voyage to assist at the siege of Troy; where the wound growing desperate, his continual cries and groans interrupted the motions of the war, and probably dishearten'd the soldiers; the Grecian chiefs therefore thought it adviseable to remove him from the army. A superstitious belief was instill'd into the multitude, that Philoctetes was struck by the hand of the gods with an incurable distemper; and Ulysses was order'd to carry him to Lemnos, an uninhabited island in the Ægean sea, and leave him there to the care of providence. In this miserable situation he remain'd for ten years; the Greeks in the mean time are inform'd by an oracle, that Troy could never be conquer'd without the arrows of Hercules, then in the possession of Philoctetes. Ulysses and Neoptolemus are dispatch'd with commands to bring him to the siege. The manner in which this expedition was conducted, and the means made use of by the artful Ulysses to gain the arrows of Hercules, constitute the subject of the tragedy; which though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and divested of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the same time in such amiable simplicity, such strength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may, perhaps, render it even more pleasing to the judicious and classical reader than those plays of Sophocles where the fable is apparently more interesting, and the manners much more similar to our own. The celebrated archbishop of Cambray was so struck with the story of Philoctetes, that he has taken the pains to weave it into his excellent work, where it forms a very beautiful episode.

See Telemaque, b. 15.

Surveying round thee, canst thou see a rock
 With double entrance ; to the sun's warm rays
 In winter open, and in summer's heat
 Giving free passage to the welcome breeze ?
 A little to the left, there is a fountain
 Of living water, where, if yet he breathes,
 He flakes his thirst ; if aught thou seest of this,
 Inform me ; so shall each to each impart
 Council most fit, and serve our common cause.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[leaving Ulysses a little behind him.]

If I mistake not, I behold a cave,
 Ev'n such as thou describ'ft.

ULYSSES.

Dost thou ? which way ?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yonder it is ; but no path leading thither,
 Or trace of human footstep.

ULYSSES.

In his cell

A chance but he hath lain him down to rest ;
 Look if he hath not.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.]

Not a creature there.

U L Y S S E S.

Nor food, nor mark of household preparation?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

A rustic bed of scatter'd leaves.

U L Y S S E S.

What more?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

A wooden bowl, the work of some rude hand,
With a few sticks for fuel.

U L Y S S E S.

This is all

His little treasure here.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Unhappy man!

Some linen for his wounds.

U L Y S S E S.

This must be then

His place of habitation; far from hence

He cannot roam; distemper'd as he is,

It were impossible; he is but gone

A little way for needful food, or herb

Of pow'r to 'swage and mitigate his pain.

Wherefore dispatch this servant to some place

Of observation, whence he may espy

His ev'ry motion, lest he rush upon us.

There's not a Grecian whom his soul so much

Cou'd wish to crush beneath him as Ulysses.

[Makes a signal to the attendant, who retires.

S C E N E II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He's gone to guard each avenue; and now,

If thou hast aught of moment to impart

Touching our purpose, say it; I attend.

ULYSSES.

Son of Achilles, mark me well; remember

What we are doing, not on strength alone,

Or courage, but on conduct will depend;

Therefore if aught uncommon be propos'd,

Strange to thy ears, and adverse to thy nature,

Reflect that 'tis thy duty to comply,

And act conjunctive with me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well! what is it?

ULYSSES.

We must deceive this Philoctetes; that

Will be thy task; when he shall ask thee who

And what thou art, Achilles' son, reply;

Thus

Thus far within the verge of truth, no more ;
 Add, that resentment fir'd thee to forsake
 The Grecian fleet, and seek thy native soil,
 Unkindly us'd by those who long with vows
 Had fought thy aid to humble haughty Troy,
 And when thou cam'st, ungrateful as they were,
 The arms of great Achilles, thy just right,
 Gave to Ulysses; here thy bitter taunts
 And sharp invectives lib'rally bestow
 On me; say what thou wilt, I shall forgive,
 And Greece will not forgive thee if thou dost not;
 For against Troy thy efforts all are vain
 Without his arrows: safely thou may'st hold
 Friendship and converse with him, but I cannot.
 Thou wert not with us when the war began,
 Nor bound by solemn oath to join our host
 As I was; me he knows, and if he find
 That I am with thee, we are both undone.
 They must be ours then, these all-conquering arms ;

Remember

The arms of great Achilles. The contest concerning the arms of Achilles was solely between Ajax and Ulysses; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid any claim to them. As Philoctetes however had been absent during the whole affair, Ulysses was at liberty to substitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, especially as his being the son of Achilles naturally justified his pretensions to the arms of his father; the fiction therefore was probable.

These all-conqu'ring arms. A dispute concerning a bow and arrows may probably seem to a modern critic but an unpromising subject for a tragedy; but the

Remember that. I know, thy noble nature
 Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud;
 But what a glorious prize is victory!
 Therefore be bold; we will be just hereafter,
 Give to deceit and me a little portion
 Of one short day, and for thy future life
 Be call'd the holiest, worthiest, best of men.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What but to hear alarms my conscious soul,
 Son of Laertes, I shall never practise.
 I was not born to flatter or betray;
 Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports)
 Who gave me birth; what open arms can do
 Behold me prompt to act, but ne'er to fraud
 Will I descend; sure we can more than match

In

the defenders of Sophocles must desire him to recollect, that on those arrows, however uninteresting the circumstance may at first appear, depended no less than the fate of a whole nation; politically consider'd therefore, it was a point of the utmost consequence; if the poet had not thought so, he would certainly have been inexcusable in bringing down a deity at last, as we shall see in the catastrophe, to determine it.

We will be just hereafter. This advice is put with great propriety into the mouth of the artful Ulysses, who, like other subtle pandars to vice, persuades his friend to the commission of a crime, and at the same time proposes the palliative of future repentance and virtue. An evasive and subtle excuse for guilt, which has perhaps done more injury to the cause of religion and truth than any other whatever. Neoptolemus answers it with all the honest indignation that such a sentiment deserved. The characters, we may observe of the two heroes, are finely contrasted, and serve like light and shade, greatly to animate and enliven the whole beautiful picture.

In strength a foe thus lame and impotent.
 I came to be a helpmate to thee, not
 A base betrayer; and O! king, believe me,
 Rather, much, rather would I fall by virtue,
 Than rise by guilt to certain victory.

U L Y S S E S.

O! noble youth, and worthy of thy fire,
 When I like thee was young, like thee of strength
 And courage boastful, little did I deem
 Of human policy; but long experience
 Hath taught me, son, 'tis not the pow'rful arm
 But soft enchanting tongue that governs all.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And thou woud'st have me tell an odious falsehood?

U L Y S S E S.

He must be gain'd by fraud.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By fraud? and why

Not by persuasion?

U L Y S S E S.

He'll not listen to it;

And force were vainer still.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What mighty pow'r

Hath he to boast?

U L Y S S E S.

ULYSSES.

His arrows wing'd with death
Inevitable.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Then it were not safe
Ev'n to approach him.

ULYSSES.

No; unless by fraud
He be secur'd.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And think'st thou 'tis not base
To tell a lye then?

ULYSSES.

Not if on that lye
Depends our safety.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who shall dare to tell it

E e

Without

Think'st thou 'tis not base &c. The character of Neoptolemus is copied from that of his father, who is represented by Homer as of an open and ingenuous disposition, and a foe to lying and dissimulation; in the ninth book of the Iliad, he crys out,

Εχθρος γὰρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς αἶδ' ἀο πύλησιν,
Ὅς δ' ἑτέρον μὲν κεύθει ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ βάζει.

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My heart detests him as the gates of hell.

POPE.

words that deserve, though from a heathen writer, to be written in letters of gold, and graven, as Solomon says, in the tablets of the heart.

Without a blush?

U L Y S S E S.

We need not blush at aught
That may promote our int'rest and success.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But where's the int'rest that shou'd bias me?
Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught
To Neoptolemus?

U L Y S S E S.

Troy cannot fall
Without his arrows.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Said'st thou not, that I
Was destin'd to destroy her?

U L Y S S E S.

Without them
Nought canst thou do, and they without thee nothing.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Then I must have them.

U L Y S S E S.

When thou hast, remember

Then I must have them. The struggle between ambition and virtue in the breast of Neoptolemus, is natural and affecting. The subtle Ulysses had discover'd that his foible was the love of glory, and therefore attacks him in the only part where he was open to persuasion. The virtue of Neoptolemus staggers at

A double prize awaits thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

The glorious names of valiant and of wise.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or shame
No more appall me.

ULYSSES.

Wilt thou do it then?

Wilt thou remember what I told thee of?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't; I have promis'd; that's sufficient.

ULYSSES.

Here then remain thou; I must not be seen;
If thou stay long, I'll send a faithful spy
Who in a sailor's habit well disguis'd
May pass unknown; of him, from time to time,
What best may suit our purpose thou shalt know.
I'll to the ship; farewell; and may the god
Who brought us here, the fraudulent Mercury,
And great Minerva, guardian of our country,
And ever kind to me, protect us still.

[Exeunt.

E e 2

SCENE

S C E N E III.

CHORUS, NEOPTOLEMUS.

CHORUS.

Master, instruct us, strangers as we are,
 What we may utter, what we must conceal.
 Doubtless the man we seek will entertain
 Suspicion of us; how are we to act?
 To those alone belongs the art to rule,
 Who bear the scepter from the hand of Jove;
 To thee of right devolves the pow'r supreme,
 From thy great ancestors deliver'd down;
 Speak then, our royal lord, and we obey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If you wou'd penetrate yon deep recess
 To see the cave where Philoctetes lyes,

Go

Master, instruct us &c. According to the original design of the chorus, their chief business was to take the part of distress'd virtue; to counter-act the bad effects that might arise from vicious characters, and to draw moral inferences from the action of the drama: they are generally therefore, as in the two preceding plays of Ajax and Electra, attendants on, and friends to the hero or heroine of the piece; a propriety which the subject of the tragedy before us would by no means admit, the distress of Philoctetes arising in a great measure from his being left alone in the island; the chorus, for this reason, is composed not of the friends of the hero, but the soldiers and followers of Ulysses and Neoptolemus; we must not be surpris'd therefore to find them conspiring with their masters to deceive Philoctetes, and throughout the play aiding and assisting the designs of their commanders; they, notwithstanding, perform the officium virile prescribed by Horace, and express their pity and concern for the man, whom it is not in their power to relieve.

Go forward; but remember to return

When the poor wand'rer comes this way, prepar'd

To aid our purpose here, if need require.

CHORUS.

O! king, we ever meant to fix our eyes

On thee, and wait attentive to thy will;

But, tell us, in what part is he conceal'd?

'Tis fit we know the place, lest unobserv'd

He rush upon us; which way doth it lye?

See'st thou his footsteps leading from the cave,

Or hither bent?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Behold the double door

Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.

CHORUS.

And whither is its wretched master gone?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubtless in search of food, and not far off;

For such his manner is; accustom'd here,

So fame reports, to pierce with winged arrows

His savage prey for daily sustenance,

His wound still painful, and no hope of cure.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Alas! I pity him; without a friend,
 Without a fellow-sufferer, left alone,
 Depriv'd of all the mutual joys that flow
 From sweet society, distemper'd too;
 How can he bear it? O! unhappy race
 Of mortal man! doom'd to an endless round
 Of sorrows, and immeasurable woe!
 Second to none in fair nobility
 Was Philoctetes, of illustrious race;
 Yet here he lyes, from ev'ry human aid
 Far off remov'd in dreadful solitude,
 And mingles with the wild and savage herd;
 With them in famine and in misery
 Consumes his days, and weeps their common fate
 Unheeded, save when babbling echo mourns
 In bitt'rest notes responsive to his woe,

NEOP.

Alas! I pity him, &c. The lamentation of the chorus in this scene, as it stands in the original, is in Strophe and Antistrophe, and was therefore most probably, as I have before observed, set to music and sung; but as it makes at the same time part of their conversation with Neoptolemus, I could not throw it into ode or rhyme without interrupting the narration, and giving a motley appearance to the dialogue; I have therefore left it in blank verse. The description of Philoctetes's distress, in this passage, is in the Greek inimitably beautiful, which I have endeavour'd to give my readers some imperfect idea of in the translation.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And yet I wonder not; for if aright
I judge, from angry heav'n the sentence came;
And Chrysa was the cruel source of all;
Nor doth this sad disease inflict him still
Incurable, without assenting gods;
For so they have decreed, lest Troy shou'd fall
Beneath his arrows e'er th' appointed time
Of it's destruction come.

CHORUS.

No more, my son;

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What sayst thou?

CHORUS.

Sure I heard a dismal groan
Of some afflicted wretch.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Which way?

CHORUS.

From angry heav'n, &c. The story of Philoctetes, as related in the fifteenth book of Telemaque, differs from that of Sophocles in this particular; Philoctetes there informs Telemachus that he drop'd by chance one of the arrows of Hercules on his own foot, and that the wound remain'd for a long time incurable. He likewise attributes this misfortune and all the distress, which he suffer'd at Lemnos, to his crime in discovering to Ulysses the place where Hercules died, and which he had solemnly sworn to conceal. The gods therefore punish'd him for his perjury.

C H O R U S.

ev'n now

I hear it, and the sound as of some step
 Slow-moving this way, he is not far from us;
 His plaints are louder now; prepare, my son.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

For what?

C H O R U S.

New troubles; for behold he comes;
 Not like the shepherd with his rural pipe
 And chearful song, but groaning heavily;
 Either his wounded foot against some thorn
 Hath struck, and pains him sorely, or perchance
 He hath espied from far some ship attempting
 To enter this inhospitable port,
 And hence his cries to save it from destruction.

[Exeunt.]

Not like the shepherd, &c. Otway has caught this image in his Orphan.

“Sweet as the shepherd’s pipe upon the mountain.”

End of A C T I.

A C T II.

PHILOCTETES. 217

ACT II.

SCENE I.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SAY, welcome strangers, what disastrous fate

Led you to this inhospitable shore,
Nor haven safe, nor habitation fit
Affording ever? of what clime, what race?
Who are ye? speak; if I may trust that garb
Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
My much-lov'd country; let me hear the sound
Of your long-wish'd for voices; do not look
With horror on me, but in kind compassion
Pity a wretch deserted and forlorn

F f

In

Say, welcome strangers, &c. The absurdity of dividing the Greek tragedies into five acts, which is perpetually recurring to us, appears remarkably evident in this place. Brumoy was obliged to make this the beginning of the second act, though it is apparent the stage is not empty. Philoctetes enters to Neoptolemus and the Chorus whilst they are talking of him. There was, however, no other method of dividing the play without making the first act three times as long as any of the rest; I have therefore follow'd this division merely for a pause to the English reader.

Do not look, &c. Philoctetes, we may naturally imagine, after ten years stay on an uninhabited island, made but an uncouth and savage appearance; this address to the chorus therefore, who are shock'd at his figure, is extremely natural, as is indeed almost every thing which Sophocles puts into the mouths of every character in the drama.

In this sad place; O! if ye come as friends,
 Speak then, and answer, hold some converse with me,
 For this at least from man to man is due.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Know, stranger, first what most thou seem'st to wish;
 We are of Greece.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! happiness to hear!

After so many years of dreadful silence,
 How welcome was that sound! O! tell me, son,
 What chance, what purpose, who conducted thee?
 What brought thee hither, what propitious gale?
 Who art thou? tell me all; inform me quickly.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Native of Scyros, thither I return;
 My name is Neoptolemus, the son
 Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Dear is thy country, and thy father dear
 To me, thou darling of old Lycomedes;
 But tell me in what fleet, and whence thou cam'st.

N E O P-

Native of Scyros, &c. Scyros was an island in the Ægean sea, of which Lycomedes was king; hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war, and falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughter, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwise call'd Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him the "darling of old Lycomedes."

NEOPTOLEMUS.

From Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

From Troy? I think thou wert not with us,
When first our fleet sail'd forth.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wert thou then there?

Or know'st thou aught of that great enterprize?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not then the man whom you behold?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How shou'd I know whom I had never seen?

PHILOCTETES.

Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?

Hath my sad story never reach'd your ear?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Never.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! how hateful to the gods,
How very poor a wretch must I be then,
That Greece shou'd never hear of woes like mine!
But they who sent me hither, they conceal'd them,
And smile triumphant, whilst my cruel wounds
Grow deeper still. O! sprung from great Achilles,

Behold before thee Pæan's wretched son,
 With whom, a chance but thou hast heard, remain
 The dreadful arrows of renown'd Alcides,
 Ev'n the unhappy Philoctetes, him
 Whom the Atridæ and the vile Ulysses
 Inhuman left, distemper'd as I was
 By the envenom'd serpent's deep-felt wound ;
 Soon as they saw that, with long toil oppress'd,
 Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock,
 There did they leave me when from Chrysa's shore
 They bent their fatal course ; a little food
 And these few rags were all they wou'd bestow ;
 Such one day be their fate ! Alas ! my son,
 How dreadful, think'st thou, was that waking to me,
 When from my sleep I rose and saw them not !
 How did I weep ! and mourn my wretched state !

When

How did I weep, &c. The character of Melifander in the Agamemnon of Thompson, is a close imitation of the Philoctetes. Our excellent descriptive poet has there transfused the spirit of Sophocles, and painted the miseries of solitude in the warmest colours. Thompson even improves on the passage before us in the following lines, which are so beautiful that I cannot help transcribing them.

Cast on the wildest of the Cyclad isles,
 Where never human foot had mark'd the shore,
 These ruffians left me——yet, believe me, Arcas,
 Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
 All ruffians as they were, I never heard

A sound so dismal as their parting oars. See Thomp. Agam. act 3.
 The sentiment in the two last lines is remarkably natural and pathetic ; but I refer my readers to the play itself, which abounds in many fine imitations of the ancient tragedy,

When not a ship remain'd of all the fleet
That brought me here; no kind companion left
To minister or needful food or balm
To my sad wounds: on ev'ry side I look'd,
And nothing saw but woe; of that indeed
Measure too full: for day succeeded day,
And still no comfort came; myself alone
Cou'd to myself the means of life afford,
In this poor grotto; on my bow I liv'd:
The winged dove, which my sharp arrow flew,
With pain I brought into my little hut,
And feasted there; then from the broken ice
I slak'd my thirst, or crept into the wood
For useful fuel; from the stricken flint
I drew the latent spark, that warms me still,
And still revives, this with my humble roof
Preserve me, son; but O! my wounds remain!
Thou seest an island desolate and waste;
No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt,

Nor

The winged dove, &c.

Herbs were my food, those blessed stores of health;
Only, when winter from my daily search
Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
In faithless snares to seize, which truly griev'd me,
My sylvan friends, that ne'er till then had known,
And therefore dreaded less, the tyrant man.

See Thompson's Agamemnon.

Nor host to welcome in the traveller;
 Few seek the wild inhospitable shore.
 By adverse winds, sometimes th' unwilling guests,
 As well thou mayst suppose, were hither driv'n;
 But when they came, they only pity'd me,
 Gave me a little food, or better garb
 To shield me from the cold; in vain I pray'd
 That they wou'd bear me to my native soil,
 For none wou'd listen: here for ten long years
 Have I remain'd, whilst misery and famine
 Keep fresh my wounds, and double my misfortune.
 This have th' Atridæ and Ulysses done,
 And may the gods with equal woes repay them!

C H O R U S.

O! son of Pæan, well might those, who came
 And saw thee thus, in kind compassion weep;
 I too must pity thee; I can no more.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I can bear witness to thee, for I know
 By sad experience what th' Atridæ are,
 And what, Ulysses.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Hast thou suffer'd then?
 And dost thou hate them too?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! that these hands
Cou'd vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ then
And Sparta shou'd confess that Scyros boasts
Of sons as brave and valiant as their own.

PHILOCTETES.

O! noble youth! but wherefore cam'st thou hither?
Whence this resentment?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will tell thee all,
If I can bear to tell it: know then, soon
As great Achilles dy'd——

PHILOCTETES.

——O! stay, my son,
Is then Achilles dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is, and not
By mortal hand, but by Apollo's shaft
Fell glorious.

PHILOCTETES.

Mycenæ then and Sparta, &c. Two cities of Peloponnesus. Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menelaus, the former of whom was king of Mycenæ, and the latter of Sparta.

By Apollo's shaft. Homer, and after him Virgil, makes Phœbus assist Paris in the death of Achilles, by wounding him with an arrow in the heel, the only part of him that was vulnerable.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! most worthy of each other,
 The slayer and the slain! permit me, son,
 To mourn his fate, e'er I attend to thine. [he weeps.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! thou need'st not weep for other's woes,
 Thou hast enough already of thy own.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Thus then it was. Soon as Achilles dy'd,
 Phoenix, the guardian of his tender years,
 Instant sail'd forth, and fought me out at Scyros;
 With him the wary chief Ulysses came;
 They told me then (or true or false I know not)
 My father dead, by me, and me alone
 Proud Troy must fall; I yielded to their pray'rs;
 I hop'd to see at least the dear remains
 Of him, whom living I had long in vain
 Wish'd to behold; safe at Sigeum's port
 Soon we arrived; in crouds the num'rous host
 Throng'd to embrace me, call'd the gods to witness
 In me once more they saw their lov'd Achilles

To

To life restor'd; but ~~he~~ alas! was gone.
 I shed the duteous tear, then sought my friends
 Th' Atridæ, (friends I thought 'em) claim'd the arms
 Of my dead father, and what else remain'd
 His late possession, when, O!-cruel words!
 And wretched I to hear them! thus they answer'd;
 "Son of Achilles, thou in vain demand'st
 "Those arms already to Ulysses giv'n;
 "The rest be thine;" I wept; and is it thus,
 Indignant I reply'd, ye dare to give
 My right away? Know, boy, Ulysses cry'd,
 That right was mine, and therefore they bestow'd
 The boon on me, me who preserv'd the arms
 And him who bore them too. With anger fir'd
 At this proud speech, I threaten'd all that rage
 Cou'd dictate to me, if he not return'd them.
 Stung with my words, yet calm, he answer'd me;
 Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place,
 Where thou shou'dst not have been; and since thou mean'st
 To brave me thus, know, thou shalt never bear

G g

Those

And him who bore them. Ulysses was reported to have taken away the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle to the Grecian camp. Ovid mentions this in his account of the contest,

His humeris, his inquam humeris, ego corpus Achillis
 Et simul arma tuli.

Meta. book 13.

Those arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis resolv'd.
 Thus injur'd, thus depriv'd of all I held
 Most precious, by the worst of men, I left
 The hateful place, and seek my native soil;
 Nor do I blame so much the proud Ulysses
 As his base masters: army, city, all
 Depend on those who rule: when men grow vile
 The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked.
 I've told thee all, and him who hates th' Atridæ
 I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

O earth! thou mother of great Jove,
 Embracing all with universal love,
 Author benign of ev'ry good,
 Thro' whom Pactolus rolls his golden flood,
 To thee, whom in thy rapid car
 Fierce lions draw, I rose and made my pray'r,

To

O! earth, &c. This is an occasional song of the chorus, which is very short, consisting only of a strophe of thirteen lines in the original; we shall find the antistrophe at a considerable distance from it, breaking the dialogue in a manner very uncommon.

Embracing all, &c. The earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea and Vesta, call'd the mother of the gods, was worship'd in Phrygia and Lybia, where the river Pactolus is said to have enrich'd Cræsus with its sands. Cybele is represented by the poets as drawn by lions.

To thee I made my sorrows known,
When from Achilles' injur'd son
Th' Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day
When proud Ulysses bore his arms away.

PHILOCTETES.

I wonder not, my friend, to see you here,
And I believe the tale; for well I know
The men who wrong'd you, know the base Ulysses;
Falsehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and nought
That's just or good can be expected from him;
But strange it is to me, that Ajax present
He dare attempt it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ajax is no more;

Had he been living, I had ne'er been spoil'd
Thus of my right,

PHILOCTETES.

Is he then dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! the son of Tydeus, and that slave,

G g 2

Sold

Son of Tydeus. Diomedes.

Sold by his father Sisyphus, they live,
Unworthy as they are.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! they do,
And flourish still.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

My old and worthy friend
The Pylian sage, ~~how is he~~ he cou'd see
Their arts, and wou'd have giv'n them better counsels.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Weigh'd down with grief he lives, but, most unhappy,
Weeps his lost son, his dear Antilochus.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! double woe! whom I cou'd most have wish'd
To live and to be happy, those to perish!
Ulysses to survive! it shou'd not be.

N E O P-

Sold by his father, &c. It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Laertes after her marriage with Sisyphus, and when she was with child of Ulysses, for which Sisyphus the first husband received a sum of money; Ulysses therefore was often reproach'd with being the son of Sisyphus.

See a note in Ajax, p. 15.

The Pylian sage. Nestor, king of Pylos. Agamemnon had such an opinion of his wisdom that Homer makes him say, if he had ten such counsellors Troy would soon fall before him.

Weeps his lost son. Antilochus was slain by Memnon in the Trojan war.

See Homer's Od. b. 4.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! 'tis a subtle foe; but deepest plans
May sometimes fail.

PHILOCTETES.

Where was Patroclus then,
Thy father's dearest friend?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He too was dead.

In war, alas! so fate ordains it ever,
The coward 'scapes, the brave and virtuous fall.

PHILOCTETES.

It is too true; and now thou talk'st of cowards,
Where is that worthless wretch, of readiest tongue,
Subtle and voluble?

NEOP-

O! 'tis a subtle foe. The original is

Σοφός παλαισῆς κείνος. ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφαὶ
Γνωμαί, Φιλοκτετῆ, ἐμποδίζονται θαλά.

which Brumoy translates thus, 'Antiloque étoit brave, mais la valeur est souvent mal récompensée, 'Antilochus was brave, but valour is often ill-rewarded.' The sense of this passage, says he, is doubtful, but it certainly alludes to Antilochus. With all due deference to Mr. Brumoy's judgment, I cannot help thinking that he is here mistaken. Philoctetes had just observed that Ulysses still lived; and Neoptolemus immediately answers, 'O! he is a subtle foe,' Σοφός παλαισῆς, 'a cunning wrestler.' Sophocles must certainly mean Ulysses, for how can Σοφός (according to Brumoy's translation) signify brave, or Σοφαὶ γνωμαί be interpreted valour? Thomson had apparently this very passage in his eye, when he makes Melifander say,

"Malice often over-shoots itself."

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Ulyſſes?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

No;

Therſites ; ever talking, never heard.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I have not ſeen him, but I hear he lives.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I did not doubt it : evil never dyes ;

The gods take care of that : if aught there be
 Fraudful and vile, 'tis ſafe ; the good and juſt
 Perish unpity'd by them ; wherefore is it ?

When gods do ill, why ſhou'd we worſhip them ?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Since thus it is, ſince virtue is oppreſs'd,
 And vice triumphant, who deſerve to live
 Are doom'd to perish, and the guilty reign ;
 Henceforth, O ! ſon of Pæan, far from Troy
 And the Atridæ will I live remote.

Therſites. For the character of Therſites, ſee Homer's iliad, b. 2.

Since thus it is &c. Addiſon had probably this paſſage in view, when he makes his Cato ſay,

“ When vice prevails, and impious men bear ſway,
 “ The poſt of honour is a private ſtation.”

I wou'd not see the man I cannot love.
 My barren Scyros shall afford me refuge,
 And home-felt joys delight my future days:
 So, fare thee well, and may th' indulgent gods
 Heal thy sad wound, and grant thee ev'ry wish
 Thy soul can form; once more, farewell. I go,
 The first propitious gale.

PHILOCTETES.

What! now, my son?

So soon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Immediately; the time demands
 We shou'd be near, and ready to depart.

PHILOCTETES.

Now, by the mem'ry of thy honour'd fire,
 By thy lov'd mother, by whate'er remains
 On earth most dear to thee, O! hear me now,
 Thy suppliant; do not, do not thus forsake me,
 Alone, oppress'd, deserted, as thou see'st,
 In this sad place; I shall, I know I must be
 A burthen to thee, but, O! bear it kindly,
 For ever doth the noble mind abhor
 Th' ungen'rous deed, and loves humanity;
 Disgrace attends thee if thou dost forsake me.

If not, immortal fame rewards thy goodness.
 Thou mayst convey me safe to OEta's shores
 In one short day; I'll trouble you no longer;
 Hide me in any part where I may least
 Molest you. Hear me; by the guardian god
 Of the poor suppliant, all-protecting Jove,
 I beg, behold me at thy feet, infirm,
 And wretched as I am, I clasp thy knees;
 Leave me not here then, where there is no mark
 Of human footstep; take me to thy home,
 Or to Eubœa's port, to OEta, thence
 Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks
 Of Sperchius' gentle stream, to meet my father,
 If yet he lives; for, oh! I beg'd him oft
 By those who hither came, to fetch me hence.
 Or he is dead, or they neglectful bent
 Their hasty course to their own native soil.
 Be thou my better guide; pity and save
 The poor and wretched. Think, my son, how frail
 And full of danger is the state of man,

Now

Hide me in any place. The original says, "throw me into the sink, foredeck, or stern;" there was no necessity of specifying these in the translation.

To Eubœa's port &c. Eubœa was a large island in the Ægean sea, now call'd Negropont. OEta, a mountain in Thessaly, now call'd Bunina.

Now prosp'rous, now adverse ; who feels no ills
Shou'd therefore fear them ; and when fortune smiles
Be doubly cautious, lest destruction come
Remorseless on him, and he fall unpitied.

CHORUS.

O ! pity him, my lord, for bitt'rest woes
And trials most severe he hath recounted ;
Far be such sad distress from those I love !
O ! if thou hat'st the base Atridæ, now
Revenge thee on them, serve their deadliest foe ;
Bear the poor suppliant to his native soil ;
So shalt thou bless thy friend, and 'scape the wrath
Of the just gods, who still protect the wretched.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Your proffer'd kindness, friends, may cost you dear ;
When you shall feel his dreadful malady
Oppress you sore, you will repent it.

CHORUS.

Never

Shall that reproach be ours.

Hh

NEOP-

When fortune smiles, &c. This is almost literally translated, and the exact sense of the original. Brumoy has added " c'est alors qu'il est beau de secourir les malheureux," " this is the time when it most becomes us to succour the unhappy ;" a sentiment not improper in the mouth of Philoctetes, but which is not in Sophocles.

O ! pity him, &c. This, in the original, is the antistrophe to the little song of the chorus, which I took notice of p. 226. The reason why I have not put it into the same measure as the other is sufficiently obvious.

In gen'rous pity

Of the afflicted thus to be o'ercome
Were most disgraceful to me; he shall go.
May the kind gods speed our departure hence,
And guide our vessels to the wish'd-for shore!

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! happy hour! O! kindest, best of men!
And you my dearest friends! how shall I thank you?
What shall I do to shew my grateful heart?
Let us be gone, but O! permit me first
To take a last farewell of my poor hut,
Where I so long have liv'd; perhaps you'll say
I must have had a noble mind to bear it;
The very sight to any eyes but mine
Were horrible, but sad necessity
At length prevail'd, and made it pleasing to me.

C H O R U S.

One from our ship, my lord, and with him comes
A stranger; stop a moment till we hear
Their business with us.

Enter a Spy in the habit of a merchant, with another Grecian.

SCENE

The wish'd-for shore. In the original, 'the place which we wish to sail to.' The expression, we see, is purposely ambiguous; Neoptolemus means Troy, and Philoctetes understands it as spoken of Scyros, his native country.
My poor hut. The Greek is ἀσκήσιον εἰσκήσιον, 'my uninhabitable habitation;' this would not bear a literal translation.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS, SPY,

S P Y.

Son of great Achilles,

Know, chance alone hath brought me hither, driv'n
By adverse winds to where thy vessels lay,
As home I sail'd from Troy; there did I meet
This my companion, who inform'd me where
Thou might'st be found: hence to pursue my course
And not to tell thee what concerns thee near
Had been ungen'rous, thou perhaps mean time
Of Greece and of her counsels nought suspecting,
Counsels against thee not by threats alone
Or words enforc'd, but now in execution.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by my virtue, stranger, for thy news
I am much bound to thee, and will repay
Thy service; tell me what the Greeks have done.

H h 2

SPY.

Son of great Achilles, &c. This spy is probably the same person who made his appearance in the first scene, and was sent out to watch for Philoctetes. Ulysses sends him back in the disguise of a merchant, to carry on the plot, and hasten as much as possible the departure of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Ulysses had already desired Neoptolemus to frame his answers according to the hints given him by the spy, and to act in concert with him; Neoptolemus, therefore, purposely turns the discourse to Ulysses, to give the spy an opportunity of mentioning his design on Philoctetes. He blends truth and falsehood, we see, together as artfully as possible, which prevents the least suspicion of fraud or treachery.

S P Y.

A fleet already fails to fetch thee back,
Conducted by old Phœnix, and the sons
Of valiant Theseus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Come they then to force me?
Or am I to be won by their persuasion?

S P Y.

I know not that; you have what I cou'd learn.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And did th' Atridæ send them?

S P Y.

Sent they are,
And will be with you soon.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But wherefore then
Came not Ulysses? did his courage fail?

S P Y.

He, e'er I left the camp, with Diomed
On some important embassy sail'd forth
In search——

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Of whom?

SPY.

The sons of Theseus, Acamas and Demophoon.

S P Y.

There was a man—but stay,
Who is thy friend here, tell me, but speak softly.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [whispering him.
The famous Philoctetes.

S P Y.

Ha! begone then,
Ask me no more; away, immediately.

PHILOCTETES.

What do these dark mysterious whispers mean?
Concern they me, my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not what
He means to say, but I wou'd have him speak
Boldly before us all, whate'er it be.

S P Y.

Do not betray me to the Grecian host,
Nor make me speak what I wou'd fain conceal;
I am but poor; they have befriended me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In me thou seest an enemy confest
To the Atridæ; this is my best friend
Because he hates them too; if thou art mine,
Hide nothing then.

SPY.

S P Y.

Consider first.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have.

S P Y.

The blame will be on you.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why, let it be;

But speak, I charge thee.

S P Y.

Since I must then, know,

In solemn league combin'd, the bold Ulysses,

And gallant Diomedes have sworn, by force

Or by persuasion to bring back thy friend;

The Grecians heard Laertes' son declare

His purpose, far more resolute he seem'd

Than Diomedes, and surer of success.

NEOPTOLEMUS,

But why th' Atridae, after so long time,

Again shou'd wish to see this wretched exile,

Whence this desire? came it from th' angry gods

To punish thus their inhumanity?

S P Y.

I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece

Of late you have not heard: there was a prophet,
 Son of old Priam, Helenus by name,
 Him in his midnight walks, the wily chief
 Ulysses, curse of ev'ry tongue, espy'd;
 Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks
 A welcome spoil; much he foretold to all,
 And added last, that Troy shou'd never fall
 Till Philoctetes from this isle return'd;
 Ulysses heard, and instant promise gave
 To fetch him hence; he hop'd by gentle means
 To gain him; those successless, force at last
 Cou'd but compel him; he wou'd go, he cry'd,
 And if he fail'd, his head shou'd pay the forfeit.
 I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone,
 Thou and thy friend, if thou wou'dst wish to save him.

PHILOCTETES.

And does the traytor think he can persuade me?
 As well might he persuade me to return
 From death to life, as his base father did.

SPY.

His father. Sisyphus; imagined by many to be the father of Ulysses: concerning whom, a superstitious report prevail'd, that having on his death-bed desired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complain'd to Pluto of her cruelty, in not performing the funeral obsequies, and was by him permitted, on promise of immediate return, to revisit this world, in order to punish her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compell'd by Mercury. It is necessary to the understanding of Sophocles, that the English reader shou'd be familiar with, and reconciled to all these absurdities contain'd in the mythology and religion of the Greeks.

240 PHILOCTETES.

S P Y.

Of that I know not: I must to my ship;
Farewell, and may the gods protect you both.

[Exit.

PHILOCTETES.

Lead me, expose me to the Grecian host!
And cou'd the insolent Ulysses hope
With his soft flatt'ries e'er to conquer me?
No; sooner wou'd I listen to the voice
Of that fell serpent, whose envenom'd tongue
Hath lam'd me thus; but what is there he dare not
Or say or do? I know he will be here
Ev'n now, depend on't; therefore, let's away;
Quick let the sea divide us from Ulysses;
Let us be gone; for well-tim'd expedition,
The task perform'd, brings safety and repose.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Soon as the wind permits us, we embark,
But now 'tis adverse.

PHILOCTETES.

Ev'ry wind is fair,
When we are flying from misfortune.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

True;

And 'tis against them too.

PHILOCT.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! no storms

Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I'm ready; take what may be necessary,

And follow me.

PHILOCTETES.

I want not much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Perhaps

My ship will furnish you.

PHILOCTETES.

There is a plant

Which to my wound gives some relief; I must

Have that.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is there aught else?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my bow,

I had forgot; I must not lose that treasure,

[Philoctetes steps towards his grotto, and brings out his bow

NEOPTOLEMUS, and arrows.]

Are these the famous arrows then?

I i

PHILOCT.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

They are:

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And may I be permitted to behold,
To touch, to pay my adoration to them?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

In these, my son, in ev'ry thing that's mine
Thou hast a right.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But if it be a crime,
I wou'd not; otherwise——

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! thou art full

Of piety; in thee it is no crime;
In thee, my friend, by whom alone I look
Once more with pleasure on the radiant sun;
By whom I live; who giv'st me to return
To my dear father, to my friends, my country.
Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more
I rise to triumph o'er them by thy aid;
Behold them, touch them, but return them to me,
And boast that virtue which on thee alone
Bestow'd such honour; virtue made them mine;
I can deny thee nothing: he, whose heart

Is grateful, can alone deserve the name
Of friend, to ev'ry treasure far superior.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Go in.

PHILOCTETES.

Come with me; for my painful wound
Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward. [Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Since proud Ixion, doom'd to feel
The tortures of th' eternal wheel,

Bound by the hand of angry Jove,
Receiv'd the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was distress so deep or woe so great
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who ever with the just and good
Guiltless of fraud and rapine stood,
And the fair paths of virtue still pursu'd;

I i 2

Alone,

Since proud Ixion, &c. The story of Ixion, here alluded to, is generally known; to the few, who are unacquainted with it, it may be sufficient to observe, that Ixion was in love with Juno; and for boasting of that success in his amour, which he never met with, was thrown by Jupiter into hell, where, being placed on a wheel encompass'd with serpents, he was turn'd round without ceasing.

This song of the chorus, agreeably to the precepts of Horace, arises immediately from the subject, being a pathetic lamentation over Philoctetes; whose distresses are painted in the warmest colours, and described in all the elegance of antient Greek poetry.

Alone on this inhospitable shore,
 Where waves for ever beat, and tempests roar;
 How cou'd he e'er or hope or comfort know,
 Or painful life support beneath such weight of woe!

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Expos'd to the inclement skies,
 Deserted and forlorn he lyes,
 No friend or fellow-mourner there,
 To sooth his sorrows, and divide his care;
 Or seek the healing plant of pow'r to 'swage
 His aching wound, and mitigate it's rage;
 But if perchance, a-while releas'd

From tort'ring pain, he sinks to rest,
 Awaken'd soon, and by sharp hunger prest,
 Compell'd to wander forth in search of food,
 He crawls in anguish to the neighb'ring wood;
 Ev'n as the tott'ring infant in despair,
 Who mourns an absent mother's kind supporting care.

S T R O P H E II.

The teeming earth, who mortals still supplies
 With ev'ry good, to him her feed denies;
 A stranger to the joy that flows
 From the kind aid which man on man bestows;
 Nor food alas! to him was giv'n,
 Save when his arrows pierc'd the birds of heav'n;

Nor

Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl,
For ten long years relieve his chearless soul;
But glad was he his eager thirst to slake
In the unwholesome pool, or ever-stagnant lake.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed;
A fairer fate, and brighter days succeed:

For he at last hath found a friend
Of noblest race, to save and to defend,
To guide him with protecting hand,
And safe restore him to his native land;
On Sperchius' flow'ry banks to join the throng
Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral song
On OËta's top, which saw Alcides rise,
And from the flaming pile ascend his native skies.

[Exeunt.

Hath found a friend &c. Brumoy observes on this passage, that the chorus, being strongly attach'd to the interest of their master Neoptolemus, are but the echos of his expressions, and though they could not therefore be ignorant of his design to carry Philoctetes to Troy instead of his native country, they here mention the latter as his real intention, which they must be supposed to do from the fear of being over-heard by Philoctetes, whose cave was close to them.

On Sperchius' banks. Sperchius was a river in Thessaly.

Melian nymphs. Melos was an island near Candy, reckon'd among the Cyclades, and now call'd Milo.

End of A C T II.

A C T III.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

COME, Philoctetes; why thus silent? wherefore
This sudden terror on thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Whence is it?

PHILOCTETES.

Nothing; my son, go on.

NEOP-

Nothing, my son. The pains, which Philoctetes felt from his wound, are described as periodical, returning at certain seasons, and attended with violent agonies and convulsions, which generally terminated in a profuse discharge of matter; the pain then ceasing, the fatigue occasion'd by it brought on a gentle slumber which relieved him. Philoctetes, feeling the symptoms of his distemper approaching, endeavours as much as possible to conceal his anguish, being apprehensive that his cries and groans might induce Neoptolemus, in spite of his promise, to leave him behind; he makes flight of it therefore, till quite over-power'd by continual torture, he acknowledges himself at last unable to stir. This circumstance, we may observe, is artfully thrown in by the poet, to stop the effect of Ulysses's stratagem, which was just on the point of execution, and which, if it succeeded, must of course have put an end to the drama; this accident intervening gives a new turn to the whole, serves to introduce the remorse and repentance of Neoptolemus, gives Ulysses an opportunity of appearing, and brings about the catastrophe.

PHILOCTETES.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it thy wound

That pains thee thus?

PHILOCTETES.

No; I am better now.

Oh! gods!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why dost thou call thus on the gods?

PHILOCTETES.

To smile propitious, and preserve us—Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art in mis'ry. Tell me; wilt thou not?

What is it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son, I can no longer
Conceal it from thee. O! I dye, I perish!
By the great gods let me implore thee, now
This moment, if thou hast a sword, O! strike,
Cut off this painful limb, and end my being.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What can this mean, that unexpected thus
It shou'd torment thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not, my son?

NEOP-

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What is the cause?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Can you not guess it?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

No.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Nor I.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

That's stranger still.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

My son, my son!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

This new attack is terrible indeed!

P H I L O C T E T E S.

'Tis inexpressible! have pity on me!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What shall I do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Do not be terrify'd,

And leave me: it's returns are regular,

And like the trav'ler, when it's appetite

Is satisfy'd, it will depart. Oh! oh!

N E O P-

PHILOCTETES. 249

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art oppress'd with ills on ev'ry side.
Give me thy hand; come, wilt thou lean upon me?

PHILOCTETES.

No; but these arrows, take, preserve 'em for me,
A little while, till I ~~grow better~~ ~~deeper~~
Is coming on me, and my pains will cease.
Let me be quiet; if mean time, our foes
Surprize thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious trust
I have reposed in thee; that were ruin
To thee, and to thy friend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be not afraid,
No hands but mine shall touch them; give them to me.

PHILOCTETES.

Receive them, son; and let it be thy pray'r
They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides. [Gives him the bow and arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

May the gods
Forbid it ever; may they guide our course
And speed our prosp'rous sails!

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my son,

I fear thy vows are vain; behold my blood
Flows from the wound; O! how it pains me! now,
It comes, it hastens; do not, do not leave me;
O! that Ulysses felt this racking torture,
Ev'n to his inmost soul: again it comes.

O! Agamemnon, Menelaus, why
Shou'd not you bear these pangs as I have done?
O! death, where art thou, death? so often call'd,
Wilt thou not listen? wilt thou never come?
Take thou the Lemnian fire, my gen'rous friend,
Do me the same kind office which I did
For my Alcides; these are thy reward;
He gave them to me, thou alone deserv'st
The great inheritance. What says my friend?
What says my dear preserver? O! where art thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I mourn thy hapless fate.

PHILOCTETES.

Be of good cheer,

Quick

The Lemnian fire. Alluding, most probably, to the generally-received opinion, that the forges of Vulcan were in the island of Lemnos.

The same kind office. Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his last moments, and set fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of mount Oeta.

Quick my disorder comes, and goes as soon;
I only beg thee not to leave me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't, I will stay.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou indeed?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Trust me, I will.

PHILOCTETES.

I need not bind thee to it

By oath.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! no; 'twere impious to forsake thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I do.

PHILOCTETES.

Thither, O! thither lead me.

[pointing up to heaven.

K k 2

NEOP-

Give me thy hand. Amongst the Greeks, in all compacts and agreements, it was usual to take each other by the right hand, that being the manner of plighting faith; this was always consider'd by men of character as equally binding with the most solemn oath; Philoctetes therefore desires no other assurance of the sincerity of his friend. It is perhaps needless here to remark, that this custom has been adopted by the moderns, and is practised in almost every nation to this day, though it does not amongst us carry so much weight with it, being seldom made use of in matters of great importance.

PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What sayst thou? where

PHILOCTETES.

Up yonder,

Above.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, loſt again? why look'ſt thou thus
On that bright circle?

PHILOCTETES.

Let me, let me go.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [lays hold of him.

Where woulſt thou go?

PHILOCTETES.

Loeſe me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will not.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

You'll kill me, if you do not.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [lets him go.

There, then; now

Is thy mind better?

PHILOCTETES.

O! receive me earth;

Receive

Receive a dying man; here must I lye;

For O! my pain's so great I cannot rise.

[Philoctetes sinks down on the earth near the entrance of the cave.]

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Sleep hath o'erta'en him, see his head is lain

On the cold earth; the balmy sweat thick drops

From ev'ry limb, and from the broken vein

Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his slumbers.

CHORUS.

(INVOCATION TO SLEEP.)

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,

Great phyfician of the mind,

Who dost nor pain nor sorrow know,

Sweetest balm of ev'ry woe,

Mildest fov'reign, hear us now;

Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow;

His eyes in gentle slumbers close,

And continue his repose;

Hear

Sleep, thou patron, &c. Philoctetes, quite faint from excess of pain, lays himself down on the earth, and sinks into a short slumber; the chorus, with great propriety, fill up the pause of action by an invocation to sleep. In the original, this speech of the chorus, and the next, are in strophe, antistrophe, and epode; the reason why I have thrown only the first part into rhyme must be obvious to the judicious reader.

Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow,

Great physician, hear us now.

And now, my son, what best may suit thy purpose

Consider well, and how we are to act;

What more can we expect? the time is come;

For better far is opportunity

Seiz'd at the lucky hour, than all the counsels

Which wisdom dictates, or which craft inspires.

NEOPTOLEMUS,

He hears us not; but easy as it is

To gain the prize, it wou'd avail us nothing

Were he not with us; Phœbus hath reserv'd

For him alone the crown of victory;

But thus to boast of what we cou'd not do,

And break our word, were most disgraceful to us.

CHORUS.

The god will guide us, fear it not, my son;

But what thou say'st, speak soft, for well thou know'st

The sick man's sleep is short; he may awake

And hear us, therefore let us hide our purpose;

If then thou think'st as he does, thou know'st whom,

This

Thou know'st whom. The chorus means Ulysses, but is afraid to mention his name, lest Philoctetes should awake and hear it, which would at once discover the whole plot against him.

This is the time; at such a time, my son,
The wisest err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes sleeps, void of all help;
Lame, impotent, unable to resist,
He is as one among the dead; ev'n now
We'll take him with us; 'twere an easy task.
Leave it to me, my son; there is no danger.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No more; his eyes are open; see, he moves.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS,

PHILOCTETES.

[Awaking.

O! fair returning light! beyond my hope;
You too my kind preservers! O! my son,
I cou'd not think thou wou'dst have stay'd so long
In kind compassion to thy friend; alas!
Th' Atridæ never wou'd have acted thus;
But noble is thy nature, and thy birth,
And therefore little did my wretchedness,

Nor

O! fair, &c. Mr. Brumoy here begins his fourth act, which is certainly very absurd, as there is not the least pause of action, or vacancy of scene; Philoctetes awaking immediately after the last speech of the chorus, who observed his eyes opening; besides that the 3d act is thus render'd most preposterously short; though the French critic remarks, that it is, notwithstanding, a complete act; "suivant l'idée des Grecs," "according to the idea of the Greeks." One may venture however to pronounce, that if the Greeks had divided their tragedies into acts, they would have done it with more judgment.

256 PHILOCTETES.

Nor from my wounds the noisome stench deter
Thy gen'rous heart. I have a little respite;
Help me, my son; I'll try to rise; this weakness
Will leave me soon, and then we'll go together.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I little thought to find thee thus restor'd.
Trust me, I joy to see thee free from pain,
And hear thee speak: the marks of death were on thee;
Raise thyself up; thy friends here, if thou wilt,
Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burthen to them
If we request it.

PHILOCTETES.

No; thy hand alone;

I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough
If they can bear with me and my distemper,
When we embark.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well, be it so, but rise.

PHILOCTETES. [Philoctetes rises.

O never fear; I'll rise as well as ever. [Exeunt.

I'll rise as well as ever. The end of the 3d act (if an act there must be) may, I think, with greater propriety be placed here; as Philoctetes may be supposed to creep into his cave to look for the plant which he mention'd, and Neoptolemus to go in with him, so that the stage would be left void. This act, even thus extended, is not half so long as the preceding; the division, however, is better than Brumoy's.

End of ACT III.

ACT IV.

PHILOCTETES.

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

HOW shall I act?

PHILOCTETES.

What says my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

I know not what to say; my doubtful mind——

PHILOCTETES.

Talk'd you of doubts? you did not surely.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ay,

That's my misfortune.

■ L I

PHILOCTETES.

How shall I act? Neoptolemus, who, as I before observed, is described to us as of an honest and ingenuous disposition, being deeply affected by the distress and anguish of Philoctetes, soften'd at the same time by the confidence which this unhappy man had reposed in him, and reflecting on the solemn contract he had just made, is struck with horror and remorse at the thought of such treachery and baseness; he advances in a pensive posture, and speaks to himself without regarding Philoctetes, who is at a loss to comprehend him, till at last he opens his heart and confesses the design; this gives a new and sudden turn to the plot, and prepares the necessary appearance of Ulysses. Thus does every circumstance in this excellent tragedy arise naturally from that which goes before it, and all the various parts of the edifice contribute to the strength, symmetry and beauty of the whole.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Is then my distress

The cause at last you will not take me with you?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

All is distress and mis'ry, when we act

Against our nature, and consent to ill.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

But sure to help a good man in misfortunes

Is not against thy nature.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Men will call me

A villain; that distracts me.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Not for this;

For what thou mean'st to do, thou may'st deserve it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What shall I do? direct me, Jove! To hide

What I shou'd speak, and tell a base untruth;

'Tis double guilt.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

He purposes at last,

I fear it much, to leave me.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Leave thee? No.

But

But how to make thee go with pleasure hence,
There I'm distress'd.

PHILOCTETES.

I understand thee not;
What means my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can no longer hide
The dreadful secret from thee; thou art going
To Troy, ev'n to the Greeks, to the Atridæ.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what say'st thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do not weep, but hear me.

PHILOCTETES.

What must I hear? what will you do with me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

First, set thee free; then carry thee, my friend,
To conquer Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Is this indeed thy purpose?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This am I bound to do.

PHILOCTETES.

Then I am lost,
Undone, betray'd; canst thou, my friend, do this?

Give me my arms again.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

It cannot be.

I must obey the pow'rs who sent me hither;
Justice enjoins; the common cause demands it.

• P H I L O C T E T E S.

Thou worst of men, thou vile artificer
Of fraud most infamous, what hast thou done?—
How have I been deceiv'd? dost thou not blush
To look upon me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring? base betrayer!
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,
The only means; give 'em, restore 'em to me;
Do not take all: alas! he hears me not,
Nor deigns to speak, but casts an angry look
That says, I never shall be free again.
O! mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds!

To

- *Thou worst of men.* The original is *ω πύρ συ*, which, according to the scholiast, was meant for a pun on the word *Πύρρος*, Pyrrhus, the first and proper name of Neoptolemus. Brumoy translates it, O! rage digne de ton nom'. I thought so poor a quibble might as well be omitted.

He hears me not. Neoptolemus repenting of his perfidy and lost in thought, is debating within himself, whether he shall restore the arrows to Philoctetes; he walks about therefore in great agitation of mind, and gives no attention to what is said to him; this whole scene is full of action, and the variety of passions, express'd in the countenance and gesture of both, must have had a fine effect in the representation.

To you I speak, to you alone I now
 Must breathe my sorrows; you are wont to hear
 My sad complaints, and I will tell you all
 That I have suffer'd from Achilles' son;
 Who, bound by solemn oath to bear me hence
 To my dear native soil, now sails for Troy.
 The perjur'd wretch first gave his plighted hand,
 Then stole the sacred arrows of my friend,
 The son of Jove, the great Alcides; those
 He means to shew the Greeks, to snatch me hence,
 And boast his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
 This empty shade, were worthy of his arm;
 Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus
 Subdu'd me, and ev'n now to fraud alone
 He owes the conquest; I have been betray'd.
 Give me my arms again, and be thyself
 Once more; O! speak; thou wilt not; then I'm lost.
 O! my poor hut! again I come to thee,
 Naked and destitute of food, once more
 Receive me, here to dye; for now, no longer
 Shall my swift arrow reach the flying prey,
 Or on the mountains pierce the wand'ring herd;
 I shall myself afford a banquet now
 To those I us'd to feed on; they the hunters,

And

And I their easy prey ; so shall the blood
 Which I so oft have shed be paid by mine ;
 And all this too from him whom once I deem'd
 Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill ;
 And yet I will not curse thee, till I know
 Whether thou retain'st thy horrid purpose,
 Or dost repent thee of it ; if thou dost not,
 Destruction wait thee.

C H O R U S.

We attend your pleasure,
 My royal lord, we must be gone ; determine
 To leave, or take him with us.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

His distress
 Doth move me much ; trust me, I long have felt
 Compassion for him.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O ! then by the gods
 Pity me now, my son, nor let mankind
 Reproach thee for a fraud so base.

N E O P.

We attend your pleasure. Brumoy sends off the chorus towards the sea-shore immediately after the words " when we embark," p. 256, and brings them back again in this place, as sent by Ulysses to know the reason of Neoptolemus's delay. This departure and return of the chorus, which is a mere conjecture of Brumoy's, is, I think, unnecessary ; besides that it is not agreeable to the conduct generally observed by Sophocles, whose chorus's always remain in the same place.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

What shall I do? wou'd I were still at Scyros,
For I am most unhappy.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son,

Thou art not base by nature, but misguided
By those who are, to deeds unworthy of thee;
Turn then thy fraud on them who best deserve it;
Restore my arms, and leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Speak, my friends,

What's to be done?

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Ha! dost thou hesitate?

Traitor! be gone. Give me the arms.

PHILOCTETES.

Speak, my friends. Neoptolemus, already resolved to atone for his crime, by restoring the arrows, applies to the chorus for their opinion, which he knew would be in favour of Philoctetes. Ulysses surprised at their unexpected delay, and impatient to be gone, leaves his ship, and, having overheard Neoptolemus, enters at this important juncture. His sudden intrusion and haughty behaviour but serve to confirm Neoptolemus in his resolution. Nothing can be better imagined or conducted than the plan of this excellent drama.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Ah me!

Ulysses here?

U L Y S S E S.

Ay! 'tis Ulysses' self

That stands before thee,

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Then I'm lost, betray'd;

This was the cruel spoiler.

U L Y S S E S.

Doubt it not.

'Twas I; I do confess it.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [To Neoptolemus.

O! my son,

Give me them back.

U L Y S S E S.

It must not be; with them

Thyself must go; or we shall drag thee hence.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And will they force me? O! thou daring villain!

U L Y S S E S.

They will, unless thou dost consent to go.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Wilt thou, O! Lemnos! wilt thou, mighty Vulcan!

With

PHILOCTETES. 265

With thy all-conqu'ring fire, permit me thus
To be torn from thee?

ULYSSES.

Know, great Jove himself
Doth here preside; he hath decreed thy fate,
I but perform his will.

PHILOCTETES.

Detested wretch,
Mak'st thou the gods a cover for thy crime?
Do they teach falsehood?

ULYSSES.

No, they taught me truth,
And therefore, hence; that way thy journey lyes. [Pointing

PHILOCTETES. to the sea.]

It doth not.

ULYSSES.

But, I say, it must be so.

PHILOCTETES.

And Philoctetes then was born a slave!
I did not know it.

ULYSSES.

No; I mean to place thee
Ev'n with the noblest, ev'n with those by whom
Proud Troy must perish.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Never will I go,
 Befall what may, whilst this deep cave is open
 To bury all my sorrows.

U L Y S S E S.

What wou'dst do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Here throw me down, dash out my desperate brains
 Against this rock, and sprinkle it with my blood.

U L Y S S E S. [To the Chorus.

Seize, and prevent him.

[They seize him.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Manacled! O! hands,

How helpless are you now! those arms, which once
 Protected, thus torn from you! thou abandon'd, [To Ulysses.
 Thou shameless wretch! from whom nor truth nor justice,
 Nought that becomes the gen'rous mind can flow,
 How hast thou us'd me! how betray'd! suborn'd
 This stranger, this poor youth, who worthier far
 To be my friend than thine, was only here
 Thy instrument; he knew not what he did,
 And now, thou see'st, repents him of the crime,
 Which brought such guilt on him, such woes on me."

But

But thy foul foul, which from its dark recess
 Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art,
 Unwilling as he was, instructed him,
 And made him soon a master in deceit.
 I am thy pris'ner now; ev'n now thou mean'st
 To drag me hence, from this unhappy shore
 Where first thy malice left me, a poor exile,
 Deserted, friendless, and tho' living, dead
 To all mankind; perish the vile betrayer!
 O! I have curs'd thee often, but the gods
 Will never hear the pray'rs of Philoctetes.
 Life and its joys are thine; whilst I unhappy,
 Am but the scorn of thee, and the Atridæ,
 Thy haughty masters; fraud and force compell'd thee,
 Or thou had'st never sail'd with them to Troy.
 I lent my willing aid; with sev'n brave ships
 I plough'd the main to serve 'em; in return
 They cast me forth, disgrac'd me, left me here;
 Thou say'st they did it; they impute the crime

M m 2

.To

From its dark recess, &c. The Greek is *δια μυχων ελεπυσ*, 'per latebras prospiciens'; the expression is remarkable, and the translation therefore almost literal.

Fraud and force compell'd thee. Ulysses, unwilling to go among the other chiefs to the siege of Troy, feign'd himself mad; but being detected by Palamedes was after all obliged to join them.

To thee; and what will you do with me now?
 And whither must I go? what end, what purpose,
 Cou'd urge thee to it? I am nothing, lost
 And dead already; wherefore, tell me, wherefore?
 Am I not still the same detested burthen,
 Loathsome and lame? Again must Philoctetes
 Disturb your holy rites? If I am with you,
 How can you make libations? That was once
 Your vile pretence for inhumanity.

O! may you perish for the deed! The gods
 Will grant it sure, if justice be their care,
 And that it is, I know. You had not left
 Your native soil to seek a wretch like me,
 Had not some impulse from the powr's above
 Spite of yourselves, ordain'd it; O! my country,
 And you, O! gods, who look upon this deed,
 Punish, in pity to me, punish all
 The guilty band! could I behold them perish,
 My wounds were nothing; that wou'd heal them all.

C H O R U S. [to Ulysses.

Observe, my lord, what bitterness of soul

His

Am I not still. This is mention'd in the first scene as the reason assign'd for exposing Philoctetes on the island; the sarcasm therefore is just and natural.

His words express; he bends not to misfortune,
But seems to brave it.

ULYSSES.

I cou'd answer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more
Than this—I act as best befits our purpose.
Where virtue, truth, and justice are requir'd,
Ulysses yields to none: I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet submit to thee.
Let him remain. Thy arrows shall suffice;
We want thee not; Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myself, with equal strength
Can aim the deadly shaft, with equal skill.
What cou'd thy presence do? let Lemnos keep thee.
Farewel! perhaps the honours, once design'd
For thee, may be reserv'd to grace Ulysses.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! shall Greece then see my deadliest foe
Adorn'd with arms which I alone shou'd bear?

ULYSSES.

No more: I must be gone.

PHILOCT-

Teucer can draw the bow. Teucer was accounted one of the best archers in the Grecian army, though Menelaus, we may remember, reproaches him for it. See note in Ajax, p. 70.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [to Neoptolemus.

Son of Achilles,

Thou wilt not leave me too? I must not lose
Thy converse, thy assistance.

U L Y S S E S. [to Neoptolemus.

Look not on him;

Away, I charge thee; 'twou'd be fatal to us.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [to the chorus.

Will you forsake me, friends? dwells no compassion
Within your breasts for me?

C H O R U S. [pointing to Neopt.

He is our master,

We speak and act but as his will directs.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know he will upbraid me for this weakness,
But 'tis my nature, and I must consent,
Since Philoctetes asks it; stay you with him,
Till to the gods our pious pray'rs we offer,
And all things are prepar'd for our departure;
Perhaps, mean time, to better thoughts his mind
May turn relenting; we must go: remember
When we shall call you, follow instantly.

[Exit with Ulysses.

SCENE

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my poor hut! and is it then decreed
Again I come to thee to part no more?
To end my wretched days in this sad cave,
The scene of all my woes; for whither now
Can I betake me? who will feed, support,
Or cherish Philoctetes? not a hope
Remains for me. O! that th' impetuous storms
Wou'd bear me with them to some distant clime
For I must perish here.

CHORUS.

Unhappy man!

Thou hast provok'd thy fate; thyself alone
Art to thyself a foe, to scorn the good,
Which wisdom bids thee take, and chuse misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

Wretch that I am, to perish here alone.

O!

O! my poor hut &c. From this place, to the words 'O! ye have brought
'back once more &c.' the Greek is all Strophe and Antistrophe, set to music,
and sung alternately by Philoctetes and the chorus.

Th' impetuous storms, &c. The Greek is *πτοχάδες* or *πτοχάδες*, which
the scholiasts interpret, harpies. Ratallerus and Brumoy, whom I have here
follow'd, render it, storms, which is the most natural and obvious sense.

272 P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! I shall see the face of man no more,
Nor shall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
And bring me sustenance! such vile delusions
Us'd to betray me! O! that pains, like those
I feel, might reach the author of my woes!

C H O R U S.

The gods decreed it; we are not to blame;
Heap not thy curses therefore on the guiltless,
But take our friendship.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

[pointing to the sea-shore,

I behold him there;

Ev'n now I see him laughing me to scorn
On yonder shore, and in his hand the darts
He waves triumphant, which no arms but these
Had ever borne. O! my dear glorious treasure!
Hadst thou a mind to feel th' indignity,
How woud'st thou grieve to change thy noble master,
The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch
So vile, so base, so impious, as Ulysses!

C H O R U S.

Justice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
Nor from his lips, reproach and bitterness

Invidious

The author of my woes. Ulysses,

Invidious flow ; Ulysses, by the voice
Of Greece appointed, only fought a friend
To join the common cause, and serve his country.

PHILOCTETES.

Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air,
And you, who on these mountains ~~love~~ to feed,
My savage prey, whom once I cou'd pursue ;
Fearful no more of Philoctetes, fly
This hollow rock, I cannot hurt you now ;
You need not dread to enter here ; alas !
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On these poor limbs, when I shall be no more.
Where can I hope for food ? or who can breathe
This vital air, when life-preserving earth
No longer will assist him ?

CHORUS.

By the gods
Let me intreat thee, if thou dost regard
Our master, and thy friend, come to him now,
Whilst thou mayst 'scape this sad calamity ;
Who but thyself wou'd chuse to be unhappy
That cou'd prevent it ?

PHILOCTETES.

O ! you have brought back

N n

Once

Once more the sad remembrance of my griefs ;
 Why, why my friends, wou'd you afflict me thus ?

C H O R U S.

Afflict thee, how ?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Think you I'll e'er return
 To hateful Troy ?

C H O R U S.

We wou'd advise thee to it.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.

C H O R U S.

That we shall

Most gladly ; to the ships, my friends, away. [Going.
 Obey your orders.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [Stops them.

By protecting Jove,
 Who hears the suppliant's pray'r, do not forsake me.

C H O R U S. [Returning.

Be calm then.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! my friends ! will you then stay ?
 Do, by the gods I beg you.

C H O R U S.

CHORUS.

Why that groan?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! I dye! my wound, my wound! hereafter
What can I do? you will not leave me; hear—

CHORUS.

What can'st thou say we do not know already?

PHILOCTETES.

O'erwhelm'd by such a storm of griefs as I am,
You shou'd not thus resent a madman's phrenzy.

CHORUS.

Comply then and be happy.

PHILOCTETES.

Never, never;

Be sure of that; tho' thunder-bearing Jove
Shou'd with his light'nings blast me, wou'd I go;
No; let Troy perish, perish all the host
Who sent me here to dye; but O! my friends,
Grant me this last request.

CHORUS.

What is it? speak.

PHILOCTETES.

A sword, a dart, some instrument of death.

N n 2

CHORUS.

My wound. The original is O! my foot, my foot, which the reader may substitute if he thinks proper.

C H O R U S.

What wou'dst thou do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'd hack off ev'ry limb.

Death, my foul longs for death.

C H O R U S.

But wherefore is it?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll seek my father.

C H O R U S.

Whither?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

In the tomb;

There he must be. O! Scyros, O! my country,

How cou'd I bear to see thee as I am!

I who had left thy sacred shores to aid

The hateful sons of Greece! O! misery! [Goes into the cave.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

E'ER now we shou'd have ta'en thee to our ships,
But that advancing this way I behold
Ulysses, and with him Achilles' son.

ULYSSES.

Why this return? wherefore this haste?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I come

To purge me of my crimes.

ULYSSES.

Indeed! what crimes?

NEOP-

E'er now we shou'd &c. The same impropriety, which struck us on the opening of the fourth act, recurs with equal force at the beginning of this. The scene is not void; and consequently no such division can take place. That of Brumoy is still more absurd, which takes in this speech to the fourth act, as if it were possible that the chorus should perceive their masters Ulysses and Neoptolemus approaching, and immediately run off the stage; it is surely much better to make them go in with Philoctetes, and come out again speaking to him still remaining in the cave.

Why this return &c. Neoptolemus advances in haste towards the cave of Philoctetes; Ulysses apprehensive of his design, follows and expostulates with him.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My blind obedience to the Grecian host,
And to thy counfels.

ULYSSES.

Hast thou practic'd aught
Base, or unworthy of thee?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yes, by art
And vile deceit betray'd th' unhappy.

ULYSSES.

Whom?

Alas! what mean you?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Nothing. But the son
Of Pæan——

ULYSSES.

Ha! what woud'st thou do? my heart
Misgives me. [aside.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have ta'en his arms, and now——

ULYSSES.

Thou woud'st restore them! speak, is that thy purpose?

Almighty

Thou woud'st restore them. The resolution of Neoptolemus to restore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, disconcerts the measures of Ulysses, and awakens the attention of the spectator, who expects with eagerness the consequences of it.

PHILOCTETES.

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Almighty Jove!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unjustly shou'd I keep

Another's right?

ULYSSES.

Now, by the gods, thou mean'st
To mock me; dost thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If to speak truth

Be mockery.

ULYSSES.

And does Achilles' son

Say this to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why force me to repeat

My words so often to thee?

ULYSSES.

Once to hear them

Is once indeed too much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubt then no more,

For I have told thee all.

ULYSSES.

There are, remember,

There

There are, who may prevent thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who shall dare

To thwart my purpose?

U L Y S S E S.

All the Grecian host,

And with them, I.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wise as thou art, Ulysses,

Thou talk'st most idly.

U L Y S S E S.

Wisdom is not thine

Either in word or deed.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Know, to be just

Is better far than to be wise.

U L Y S S E S.

But where,

Where is the justice thus unauthoris'd

To give a treasure back thou ow'st to me,

And to my counsels?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have done a wrong,

And I will try to make atonement for it.

U L Y S S E S.

ULYSSES.

Dost thou not fear the pow'r of Greece?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I fear

Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.

ULYSSES.

'Tis not with Troy then we contend, but thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not that.

ULYSSES.

See'st thou this hand? behold

It grasps my sword.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Mine is alike prepar'd

Nor seeks delay.

ULYSSES.

But I will let thee go ;

Greece shall know all thy guilt, and shall revenge it.

[Exit Ulysses.]

O o

SCENE

I will let thee go. Brumoy, whose notions of honour are perhaps a little too modern on the occasion, is shock'd at this appearance of cowardice in Ulysses, who after thus exasperating Neoptolemus, instead of resenting his cavalier treatment, very prudently retires, with a threat to tell the Grecians of his ill behaviour. The conduct of Sophocles in this particular is, notwithstanding, unexceptionable ; for, however unavoidable a duel might have been on the French stage in such a circumstance, the antients did not see the necessity

PHILOCTETES.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Twas well determin'd; always be as wise

As now thou art, and thou may'st live in safety.

[approaching toward the cave.

Ho! son of Pæan! Philoctetes leave

Thy rocky habitation, and come forth.

PHILOCTETES. [from the cave.

What noise was that? who calls on Philoctetes?

[he comes out.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what wou'd you, strangers? are you come

To heap fresh mis'ries on me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be of comfort,

And hear the tidings which I bring.

PHILOCTETES.

I dare not;

Thy

cessity of it; their heroes, as we find in Homer, bore a great deal of bad language from each other without drawing their swords. It would therefore have been highly inconsistent with the character of the prudent Ulysses to have quarrel'd and fought with his friend, and thus put an end at once to the whole scheme of his expedition.

Thy flatt'ring tongue already hath betray'd me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And is there then no room for penitence?

PHILOCTETES.

Such were thy words, when, seemingly sincere,

Yet meaning ill, thou stol'st my arms away.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But now it is not so. I only came

To know if thou art resolute to stay,

Or fail with us.

PHILOCTETES.

No more of that; 'tis vain

And useless all.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Art thou then fix'd?

PHILOCTETES.

I am;

It is impossible to say how firmly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I thought I cou'd have mov'd thee, but I've done.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well thou hast; thy labour had been vain;

For never cou'd my soul esteem the man

Who rob'd me of my dearest, best possession,

284 P H I L O C T E T E S.

And now wou'd have me listen to his counsels;
Unworthy offspring of the best of men!
Perish th' Atridæ! perish first Ulysses!
Perish thyself!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Withhold thy imprecations,
And take thy arrows back.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

A second time

Woud'st thou deceive me?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By th' almighty pow'r
Of sacred Jove I swear.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! joyful sound!

If thou say'st truly.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Let my actions speak.
Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again.

[gives him the arrows.

S C E N E IV.

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

U L Y S S E S.

Witness ye gods, here in the name of Greece

"And"

And the Atridæ, I forbid it.

PHILOCTETES.

Hal

What voice is that? Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

Ay, 'tis I,

I who perforce will carry thee to Troy
Spite of Achilles' son.

PHILOCTETES.

[raising his arm as intending to throw an arrow at Ulysses:

Not if I aim

This shaft aright.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by the gods I beg thee

Stop thy rash hand.

[laying hold of him:

PHILOCT

Not if I aim, &c. Ulysses, strongly opposing and protesting against the restitution of the arrows, Philoctetes no sooner regains them than, warm with resentment, he aims an arrow at his breast, but is withheld by Neoptolemus. Mr. de Fenelon, in his *Telemaque*, has varied a little from Sophocles in this particular. He supposes Ulysses to have made a sign to Neoptolemus to restore the arrows; and that Philoctetes notwithstanding, in the heat of passion, drew the bow against his enemy, but was stop'd by Neoptolemus. 'I was ashamed of myself, says Philoctetes (see *Tel. b. 15*) for thus using my arrows against him who had restored them to me, and at the same time could not bear the thought of being indebted for any thing to a man whom I so abhor'd.' This, as Brumoy judiciously observes, is spirited, but not agreeable to the conduct of Sophocles; as the propriety of character is destroy'd by making Ulysses consent to the restoration of the arrows, and likewise by the ungenerous behaviour of Philoctetes in endeavouring to kill his benefactor.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Let go my arm.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I will not ;

Shall I not slay my enemy ?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

O ! no,

'Twou'd cast dishonour on us both.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Thou know'st

These Grecian chiefs are loud pretending boasters,
 Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know it ; but remember, I restor'd
 Thy arrows to thee, and thou hast no cause
 For rage, or for complaint against thy friend.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I own thy goodness ; thou hast shewn thyself
 Worthy thy birth, no son of Sisyphus,
 But of Achilles, who on earth preserv'd
 A fame unspotted, and amongst the dead
 Still shines superior, an illustrious shade.

N E O P

No son of Sisyphus. See note p. 228. The injuries he had received from Ulysses are always uppermost in his thoughts, and he takes every opportunity of shewing his resentment of them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Joyful I thank thee for a father's praise,
 And for my own; but listen to my words,
 And mark me well; misfortunes, which the gods
 Inflict on mortals, they perforce must bear,
 But when oppress'd by voluntary woes
 They make themselves unhappy; they deserve not
 Our pity or our pardon; such art thou;
 Thy savage soul, impatient of advice,
 Rejects the wholesome counsel of thy friend,
 And treats him like a foe; but I will speak,
 Jove be my witness! therefore hear my words,
 And grave them in thy heart; the dire disease
 Thou long hast suffer'd is from angry heav'n,
 Which thus afflicts thee for thy rash approach
 To the fell serpent, which on Chrysa's shore
 Watch'd o'er the sacred treasures; know beside,
 That whilst the sun in yonder east shall rise,
 Or in the west decline, distemper'd still
 Thou ever shalt remain, unless to Troy
 Thy willing mind transport thee; there the sons
 Of Æsculapius shall restore thee, there
 By my assistance shalt thou conquer Troy;

288 PHILOCTETES.

I know it well; for that prophetic sage,
 The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold
 It shou'd be so; 'proud Troy (he added then)
 'This very year must fall, if not, my life
 'Shall answer for the falsehood:' therefore yield;
 Thus to be deem'd the first of Grecians, thus
 By Pæan's fav'rite sons to be restor'd,
 And thus mark'd out the conqueror of Troy,
 Is sure distinguish'd happiness.

PHILOCTETES.

O! life

Detested, why wilt thou still keep me here!
 Why not dismiss me to the tomb? alas!
 What can I do? how can I disbelieve
 My gen'rous friend? I must consent, and yet
 Can I do this, and look upon the fun?
 Can I behold my friends, will they forgive,
 Will they associate with me after this?
 And you, ye heav'nly orbs that roll around me,

How

How can I disbelieve, &c Philoctetes, moved by the generosity of Neoptolemus in restoring the arrows, is almost persuaded to lay aside his resentment and sail for Troy, but at the same time cannot bear the thought of joining Ulysses and the Atreidæ; this doubt and uncertainty causes a new situation in the drama, which keeps up the attention of the audience. One cannot help observing with what a variety of interesting circumstances Sophocles has contrived to embellish a subject so simple as to appear at first sight incapable of admitting any.

How will you bear to see me link'd with those
 Who have destroy'd me, ev'n the sons of Atreus,
 Ev'n with Ulysses, source of all my woes?
 My suff'rings past I cou'd forget, but O!
 I dread the woes to come, for well I know
 When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
 Unnumber'd crimes, and ills to ills succeed.
 It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
 Shou'dst thus advise me, whom it ill becomes
 To think of Troy; I rather had believ'd
 Thou wou'dst have sent me far, far off from those
 Who have defrauded thee of thy just right,
 And gave thy arms away; are these the men
 Whom thou wou'dst serve? whom thou wou'dst thus compel me
 To save and to defend? it must not be.
 Remember, O! my son, the solemn oath
 Thou gav'st to bear me to my native soil;
 Do this, my friend, remain thyself at Scyros,
 And leave these wretches to be wretched still.
 Thus shalt thou merit double thanks, from me,
 And from my father; nor by succour giv'n
 To vile betrayers, prove thyself as vile.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou say'st most truly; yet confide in heav'n,

Rep

Trust

Trust to thy friend, and leave this hated place.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Leave it? for whom? for Tröy and the Atridæ?
These wounds forbid it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

They shall all be heal'd,
Where I will carry thee.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

An idle tale
Thou tell'st me, surely, dost thou not?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I speak

What best may serve us both.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

But, speaking thus,
Dost thou not fear th' offended gods?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Why fear them?

Can I offend the gods by doing good?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

What good? to whom? to me or to th' Atridæ?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I am thy friend, and therefore wou'd persuade thee.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And therefore give me to my foes.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas !

Let not misfortunes thus transport thy soul
To rage and bitterness.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou woud'st destroy me:

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou know'st me not.

PHILOCTETES.

I know th' Atridæ well,

Who left me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They did ; yet they perhaps,

Ev'n they, O ! Philoctetes, may preserve thee.

PHILOCTETES.

I never will to Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What's to be done ?

Since I can ne'er persuade thee, I submit ;

Live on in misery.

PHILOCTETES.

Then, let me suffer ;

Suffer I must ; but, O ! perform thy promise ;

Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home

Instant, my friend, nor ever call back Troy
To my remembrance; I have felt enough
From Troy already.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Let us go, prepare.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! glorious sound!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Bear thyself up.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I will,

If possible.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But how shall I escape

The wrath of Greece?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! think not of it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What

If they shou'd waste my kingdom?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll be there.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! what canst thou do?

PHILOCTETES.

And with these arrows

Of my Alcides——

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

PHILOCTETES.

Drive

Thy foes before me; not a Greek shall dare
Approach thy borders.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If thou wilt do this,

Salute the earth, and instant hence. Away.

SCENE IV.

HERCULES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS,
PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

HERCULES descends and speaks.

Stay, son of Pæan; lo! to thee 'tis giv'n
Once more to see and hear thy lov'd Alcides,

Who

Stay, son of Pæan &c. Hercules after a life spent in the laborious service of virtue, was admitted into heaven by his father Jupiter, and rank'd among the gods. Agreeably to his character whilst upon earth, he leaves the regions of peace and happiness only to serve his country and his friend. To justify the poet, with regard to this appearance of a deity, it may not be improper here to observe, that Philoctetes is described as fierce and inexorable, with a mind sower'd by injuries, and a heart harden'd by calamity; he is not to be soften'd by the art and subtlety of Ulysses, nor subdu'd by the honour and generosity of Neoptolemus; a change of will could not therefore take place.

Who for thy sake hath left yon heav'nly mansions,
 And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove;
 To turn thee from the paths thou mean'st to tread,
 And guide thy footsteps right; therefore attend.
 Thou know'st what toils, what labours I endur'd,
 E'er I by virtue gain'd immortal fame;
 Thou too like me by toils must rise to glory;
 Thou too, must suffer, e'er thou can'st be happy;
 Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls,
 Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue rais'd
 To highest rank, and leader of the war,
 Paris, it's hateful author, shalt thou slay,
 Lay waste proud Troy, and send thy trophies home,
 Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy fire
 On OEta's top: the gifts which Greece bestows
 Must thou reserve to grace my fun'ral pile,
 And be a monument to after ages

Of

place without departing from that propriety of character which Sophocles always religiously observes. The descent of Hercules is, on this account, both necessary and beautiful; for though in some of the Greek tragedies, the interposition of the gods can perhaps hardly be justified, the severest critic will, I believe, here acknowledge the 'dignus vindice nodus' of Horace. To the manner of this appearance and the machinery made use of on the occasion we are left entire strangers; we have no lights from antiquity concerning the decorations of the theatre, and are only told in general, that they were made with the utmost splendor and magnificence; the character of Hercules during his short stay is sustain'd with great dignity; he says no more than what is absolutely necessary on the occasion, and the

Of these all-conq'ring arms.—Son of Achilles,

[turning to Neoptolemus.

(For now to thee I speak) remember this,

Without his aid thou can'st not conquer Troy,

Nor Philoctetes without thee succeed;

Go then, and, like two lions in the field

Roaming for prey, guard ye each other well;

My Æsculapius will I send ev'n now

To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy;

But when you lay the vanquish'd city waste,

Be careful that you venerate the gods;

For far above all other gifts doth Jove,

Th' almighty father, hold true piety;

Whether we live or dye, that still survives

Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Once more to let me hear that wish'd-for voice,

To see thee after so long time, was bliss

I cou'd not hope for. O! I will obey

Thy great commands most willingly.

PHILOCT-

Be careful, &c. This is supposed by the commentators to convey a kind of prophetic censure of Neoptolemus, who after his return to Troy murder'd the aged Priam, even at the altar of Hercæan Jove.

Whether we live or die, &c. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, c. 14, v. 8.

PHILOCTETES.

And I.

HERCULES.

Delay not then; for, lo! a prosp'rous wind
 Swells in thy sail; the time invites, adieu.

[Hercules reascends.]

SCENE V.

PHILOCTETES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS,
 CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

I will but pay my salutations here,
 And instantly depart——To thee, my cave,
 Where I so long have dwelt, I bid farewell;
 And you, ye nymphs, who on the wat'ry plains
 Deign to reside, farewell; farewell the noise
 Of beating waves, which I so oft have heard
 From the rough sea, which by the black winds driv'n
 O'erwhelm'd me shiv'ring; oft th' Hermæan mount
 Echo'd my plaintive voice, by wint'ry storms
 Afflicted, and return'd me groan for groan.
 Now, ye fresh fountains, each Lycæan spring,

I

Th' Hermæan mount. A mountain in Lemnos; though some are of opinion that the word Hermæan is only an epithet generally appropriated to mountains, from Hermes or Mercury, the god of hills and groves.

Each Lycæan spring. Fountains sacred to Apollo Lycius.

I leave you now; alas! I little thought
To leave you ever; and thou sea-girt isle,
Lemnos, farewell; permit me to depart
By thee unblam'd, and with a prosp'rous gale
To go where fate demands, where kindest friends
By counsel urge me, where all-powerful Jove
In his unerring wisdom hath decreed.

CHORUS.

Let us be gone; and to the ocean nymphs
Our humble pray'rs prefer that they wou'd all
Propitious smile, and grant us safe return.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

